
SRUTI RANJANI 2012



A publication of
SRUTI- The India Music and Dance Society
Philadelphia, PA

Table of Contents

From the President's Desk.....	Raji Venkatesan.....	2
From the Publications & Outreach Committee.....	Lakshmi Radhakrishnan.....	3
A hundred years: Some reflections on Carnatic Music.....	Vidyasankar Sundaresan.....	4
Madurai Mani Iyer – A Personal Tribute.....	V.K.Balasubrahmanyam.....	6
Dr. Sripada Pinakapani – A Brief Biography.....	Bhaskari & Sindhu Budhavarapu	8
Sri vOIEti venkaTESwarlu gAru – Man of Transcendent Music.....	Prabhakar Chitrapu.....	9
Brahmashri P.K. Rajagopala Iyer – A Tribute.....	Viswaram Janakiraman.....	13
In Memory of T.N. Bala.....	Sumanth Swaminathan.....	14
Blessings from a Legend.....	Bhaskari & Sindhu Budhavarapu	15
A Maestro in fine mettle.....	Rajee Raman.....	16
SRUTI Celebrates T. Brinda's Centennial Year: An Appreciation.....	Uma Prabhakar.....	17
Images from the 2012 Spring Concert Season..		21
Images from the 2012 Fall Concert Season.....		22
Images from the 2012 Outreach Sessions.....		23
Images from 2012		24
Images from 2012		25
Images from 2012		26
Dr. Vinjamuri Anasuya Devi-Emotions of life through folk songs.....	Vidya Jayaraman.....	27
Dr. Indira Peterson -Songs of the fortune-telling Kuṛavañci.....	Vidya Jayaraman.....	28
Rama Vaidyanathan at the Zellerbach Theatre.....	Ardhnarishwar.....	30
Mindfulness of the Meandering Flute.....	Cody Lake.....	31
Resolving the Classical and Folk Traditions.....	Brian Hoang.....	34
nandanAr caritram – The Storyline.....	Uma Prabhakar.....	36
All about Style and Approach – Sanjay Subrahmanyam Concert Review.....	P.Sivakumar.....	38
An appreciation of folk and classical music from India.....	P.Swaminathan.....	39
S. Sowmya at Swarthmore College.....	Steven P. Hopkins.....	40
Shashank and The Manganiyars at the University of Pennsylvania.....	Kati Holland.....	41
Shashank and The Manganiyars at the University of Pennsylvania.....	Naimah Hares.....	42
Brilliant showcase of Power and Passion.....	Neha Natraj	44

SRUTI thanks the following granting agencies for their generous support this year

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage through the Philadelphia Music Project
The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
The Samuel S. Fels Fund





Sruti

The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia

Board of Directors

President

Raji Venkatesan

President-Elect

Ravi Pillutla

Treasurer

Venkat Kilambi

Secretary

Bhuvana Srinivasan

Directors

Ramana Kanumalla
Lakshmi Radhakrishnan
Nari Narayanan
Uma Sivakumar
Sundar Arunapuram

Committees

Marketing and Publicity

Nari Narayanan (Chair)
Anwesha Dutta
Ravi Pillutla
Niranjan Raman
Vijay Seshadri
Raman Visweswaran

Publications & Outreach

Lakshmi Radhakrishnan (Chair)
Sundari Balakrishnan
Harish Bevinahally
Prabhakar Chitrapu
Rungun Nathan
Mani Subramaniam
Raman Visweswaran

Resources & Development

Ramana Kanumalla (Chair)
Sunanda Gandham
Venkat Kilambi
Uma Natarajan
Uma Prabhakar
Viji Swaminathan

Established in 1986, SRUTI is dedicated to bringing Indian Classical Music and Dance to communities in the Delaware Valley. SRUTI is a registered tax-exempt not-for-profit organization under IRS section 501(c)(3).

Tax ID: 23-2454367

From the President's Desk

Welcome to the 2012 issue of Sruti Ranjani. It feels like only yesterday when our 2012 journey began with the Thyagaraja Aradhana with the featured concert of Ashvin Bhogendra. The main concert season began with a lecture demonstration and solo violin concert by R.K.Shriramkumar. Now here we are on Sruti Day as the curtain comes down on yet another fantastic annual season.

The 2012 season has been extremely successful for Sruti not only from an audience development standpoint but more importantly, every artiste we presented kept the bar raised at an exceptionally high artistic level. Moreover, certainly not to be forgotten, is the number of times the visiting artistes commented about the wonderful audience and presenting stage we have here in Philadelphia. Our grantors constantly remark on the amazing work that is being done by the organization.

This year, Sruti has brought a good mix of vocal and instrumental music concerts, as well as two dance programs. We were able to feature some of the topmost representatives in the field including Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Ranjani and Gayathri, Priyadarsini Govind, Rama Vaidyanathan, S. Sowmya and Shashank Subrahmanyam. We paid tribute to two centenarians. A good mix of traditional and innovative programming that pushed the boundaries marked the season. All of these concerts were presented at well-suited venues. We collaborated with the Annenberg Center for Performing Arts to present Rama Vaidyanathan's dance. A Carnatic concert was featured for the first time in the Lively Arts Series of the Office of Cultural Affairs, Montgomery County Community College where we co-presented the concert by S. Sowmya and Bharat Sundar.

I look back with pride and satisfaction at the magnitude of the outreach events Sruti was able to do this year with contextualization activities leading to the Fall concerts. Sruti presented workshops and master classes by visiting artistes at Bryn Mawr College, University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, Swarthmore College and Montgomery County Community College. These sessions were very well attended and received by the academic communities and this has encouraged us to explore the integration of Indian classical performing arts into the curricula of some of the local higher education institutions. Sruti made strides in audience engagement with a radio show on WRTI's Crossover program to explain Carnatic music to the listeners. We worked with the Pew to create pre-concert podcasts to give prospective concert attendees an appreciation and background to the concert.

As you can see, all of these events have involved a great level of detailed work. Behind the scenes, my colleagues on the Sruti Board and its committees have worked passionately, and with genuine care to ensure the flawless execution of every one of our activities this year. The families of the Board members worked cheerfully and tirelessly to support all of these activities. Multiple members of the Sruti community volunteered their skills to assist in various areas. Our search for funding for the year was successful with the grants enabling us to present many of these activities. We also enjoyed the support of your sponsorships.

This is a very exciting time in Sruti's growth as it has clearly emerged in recent years as a key player in the cultural scene of the Philadelphia region. One can even feel the infectious vibrancy at each of the events. In closing, I urge the readers to become involved with Sruti if you are not already, contribute your skills and time to continue to take this special organization to further heights. Please consider a Sruti 2013 sponsorship and enjoy being part of this excellence.

With warm regards,
Raji Venkatesan

From the Publications & Outreach Committee

Dear Sruti Supporter,

Welcome to Sruti day and the final Sruti publication of 2012. Last year being the silver jubilee for Sruti, our theme was 25. This year we jump decades and celebrate 100.

Vidyasankar starts the ball rolling with a thoughtful reflection on the past 100 years of Carnatic music. A personal tribute to Shri Madurai Mani Iyer, whose centenary year was celebrated in 2012, is followed by a biography on the centenarian living legend Dr. Sripada Pinakapani. Two students from this area had the privilege to meet him and sing in his presence this summer and they write about the experience. You can then read the vivid & loving portrayal of Sri Voleti Venkateswarlu, a disciple of Dr. Pinakapani. We round out the 100-year theme with a short sketch on the noted musicologist Sri P.K.Rajagopala Iyer whose centenary will be celebrated in 2013.

You will also have the opportunity to re-live the Sruti Fall season through the mind and pen of your fellow music and dance enthusiasts. Lastly, enjoy the pictorial walk through the 2012 season with the photograph collection sprinkled throughout this edition. I would like to acknowledge Dinakar Subramanian, who with diligence and a photographer's eye, has taken all of the Sruti event photographs that appear in this book.

None of this is possible without the dedication and enthusiasm of the community of writers. They have carved out time from amidst their personal and work lives to eloquently share their thoughts and experiences with everyone and we are all richer for that. My heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all who have authored for Sruti publications this year.

On behalf of the 2012 Sruti publications and outreach committee, I wish you a wonderful Holiday season.

Happy readings.

Lakshmi Radhakrishnan

Chair, Publications & Outreach Committee

Please accept our apologies for any errors or omissions you may find.

The articles and reviews in this magazine are published with a spirit of openness of communication and freedom of expression and the opinions contained herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Sruti, its board, or its members.

This is the online version of Sruti Ranjani 2012. It has more color photographs and references that were missing in the print version.

****A Note we received from one of the artists.....**

[Sruti hosted Shashank & his troupe of musicians during the last week of September when they conducted outreach programs at Temple University & the University of Pennsylvania in addition to their regular concert at the Painted Bride Art Center.]

Dear Raji,

Our grateful thanks to you for the wonderful effort of your team and you - we thoroughly enjoyed being at Philly and our thanks to all who gave their valuable time of theirs in hosting the band's performance.

Your efforts were truly a benchmark for others to follow and it was just brilliant.

Thanks again and please do stay in touch.

*Regards,
Shashank*

A hundred years: Some reflections on Carnatic Music

Vidyasankar Sundaesan

The year 2012 marks the centenary of at least three highly regarded musicians of yesteryears, Smt T. Brinda (Vocal and Veena), Madurai Mani Iyer (Vocal) and Palghat Mani Iyer (Mridangam). A number of music organizations throughout the world, including Sruti, have honored their memories through concerts, lecture demonstrations and releases of recordings. As the year draws to a close, I offer here some rumination on what the passage of time has meant for Carnatic music.

Imagine the world of Carnatic music in the year 1912. More than half a century had passed since the times of Thyagaraja, Dikshitar and Syama Sastri. Tanjavur, which had been the epicenter of Carnatic music activity for more than two centuries before the times of the Trinity, had been brought under direct British rule. Under the Nayaks and then the Marathas, Tanjavur had attracted artists from all over south India as well as a few from regions further north. With the fall of the Tanjavur Maratha dynasty, the loss of patronage for the arts was immense. Along with the decline of royal favor, the big temples of south India were also facing hard times and could not afford to support the artistic communities. Elsewhere in south India, there were still some Indian rulers in regions like Mysore, Travancore and Vizianagaram, who offered some level of patronage to the performing arts, but the times were difficult. The British Empire was at its peak, but the global tensions that would erupt in a couple of years into the First World War were making themselves felt. The United States of America had not yet risen as a power to be reckoned with in the world. Within India, ideas of self-rule and a desire for some level of political independence from the British were gaining momentum, but in a manner that would increasingly make the native rulers irrelevant to the future.

Under the circumstances, performing musicians, composers, dancers, choreographers and musical instrument makers found themselves at a crossroads. Many of them were in the process of moving to a newly growing city, variously called Madras, Chennai, Chennapatnam, or simply Patnam. People were increasingly abandoning the traditional modes of training that would have prepared them for their caste or community vocation, opting instead for English education. Those who had thereby entered the middle and lower rungs of the growing civil services and judiciary established by the British rulers were concentrated in this city, which was the nerve center of the Madras Presidency. These English educated Indians were the new elite, emerging as the twentieth century patrons of art and culture, replacing the Rajas and Zamindars of the past. The Sabhas that they were setting up were the new institutions, rather than courts and temples. These new institutions maintained membership lists, charged dues for joining them, issued tickets for concerts and paid the artistes who performed. In other words, they were the prototypes for today's Sruti!

Apart from this social background, the technology of Carnatic music was also extremely quaint by today's standards. Audio recording and sound amplification technology were in their infancy. The quality of the resultant sound, both in its amplified form and its recorded form, left much to be desired. And unlike today, when a small hand-held device can hold vast amounts of high quality sound, the materials and instruments needed to reproduce the amplified or recorded sound were clunky and noisy. Most south Indians of an artistic bent had a love-hate relationship with these new and strange developments and at the time, most of them were opposed to introducing these technologies into the world of Carnatic music. However, we should not judge such leading lights of the art adversely for being sticks in the mud. It was not as if they were opposed to foreign influences in an unthinking manner. Over the previous century, those who had been exposed to the British military bands had zeroed in on the violin as the Western instrument that would be most suited to adapt to Carnatic music. Since the early days of Baluswami Dikshitar in the 1840s, so much progress had already been made in changing the tuning of this instrument and adapting the posture required to play it, that the violin had already become a more or less indispensable accompaniment for vocal Carnatic music. This illustrates that the world of Carnatic music sought to pick and choose what it could incorporate, when and in what fashion.

Sensitive and refined musicians like Veena Dhanammal frowned upon both sound amplification and sound recordings. They were connoisseurs of the natural sound and could not stand the distortions introduced and noise added by the microphones, loudspeakers and recording devices of their day. And they felt that recordings did not do justice to the depth and extent of their art. A huge phonograph cylinder or a gramophone record could hold at most a few minutes of recorded sound, which could hardly be representative of their artistic output. Sensitive musicians who were steeped in the old culture of Carnatic music also had a philosophical objection to the recording of music. They valued the immediate experience of music very highly and felt that a high art like Carnatic music should only be heard in the correct context of a performance in a temple or a royal court or an intimate chamber setting at home. Sound recording technology and the possibility it offered of their music being played back at a different place and a different time, divorced from the original context in which they produced their music, must have felt quite inauthentic to them.

Turning to sound amplification, even as late as the 1960s, Palghat Mani Iyer rebelled against the imposing presence of the microphone in concerts and announced that he would play the Mridangam only for organizations and musicians that agreed to abolish the mike completely in the concert. From an artistic perspective, his objections to sound amplification had a sound basis, as he keenly felt that the very character and quality of Carnatic music had changed in his lifetime.

Another technology that impinged upon Carnatic music was that of printing. The art that had been transmitted through oral instruction from teacher to disciple was increasingly being set down in notation and issued out in books and journals. A visual aid was thereby added to the aural experience of music. Some people were still experimenting with using European staff notation for the Carnatic music repertoire, but this was suited better for harmony, which conceptually dominated Western classical music. Carnatic music, being heavily dominated by melody and rhythm, had to evolve its own style of notation. Pioneers like Subbarama Dikshitar, who had recently published the *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini*, had opted for depicting the notes as sa-ri-ga-ma etc and invented various symbols to mark the characteristic *gamakas* and *prayogas* that are central to the music. Printing technology was beginning to affect Carnatic music in another manner as well. In a previous generation, a musician would have got feedback about his performance from his elders, peers and knowledgeable patrons, in a private setting. The rise of newspapers like *Swadesamitran* and *The Hindu*, which were meant for public consumption, resulted in music concerts and dance performances being reviewed in writing, by people who could choose to hide their identity with a pseudonym. Many senior performers of the day felt highly insulted, not necessarily by the content of a concert review, but by the very fact that reviews were being written by a member of the audience whose level of musical knowledge may or may not have been of sufficiently high caliber.

Fast forward to today. The social context of Carnatic music has changed beyond recognition. We live not only in Indian cities, but in American, European and Australian cities. We observe Thyagaraja Aradhana celebrations not according to the traditional Indian calendar, but according to our convenience today, which is sometimes constrained by decisions taken by the good people at the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana! In the US, we have formed ourselves into organizations modeled upon the first Sabhas that grew in Chennai. And technology rules the roost. We cannot dream of having a performance in the absence of a mike, so much so that we feel the need for it even if we are only getting together for a musical evening in our own living rooms or basements at home. And of course, we obsessively record everything, sometimes surreptitiously! The artistes who object to recording activity today do so for quite different reasons than a hundred years ago.

One area in which today's sound recording capabilities offer a huge advantage is the pedagogical context. Over the period of a century, the science and art of writing notation of Carnatic music has not succeeded in evolving any widely accepted norms. This is largely because no system of written notation has managed to capture adequately the fundamental subtleties of the music. One can opt either for a highly simplified notation system that simply outlines how lyrical, melodic and rhythmic structures come together in a composition, or go with a densely complicated system that attempts to visually represent every single glide and *anuswara* that goes into each characteristic *prayoga* woven into the composition. The former often succeeds in presenting nothing more than a bare skeletal structure and presumes prior knowledge of how the whole thing is to be actually rendered, while the latter quickly becomes unreadable, except when one already knows how the whole thing is to be rendered. Overall, the value of intensely careful listening cannot be overemphasized in the context of learning Carnatic music. The ease with which recording can be done today, at a decent level of sound quality even in a small handheld device, can cut the Gordian knot of written notation, as it were. Carnatic music students today have the ability to capture a reference point that can vastly improve their learning process, by repeatedly returning to it artfully and carefully. Students can use such recordings to advantage, in order to internalize both the intricacy of each nuance and the grandeur of the overall structure when it comes to compositions in Carnatic music.

While the core content of what constitutes Carnatic music seems to have a continuity that stretches back at least a couple of hundred years, much about the music has changed irrevocably within the last hundred years. In the year 1912, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar was a young man who was experimenting with what should be presented in a Carnatic music concert. Today, he is often credited with refining the so-called *Kutcheri Paddhati*. In his day, he did face criticism from various quarters, for drastically shortening the time allotted to the *Ragam Tanam Pallavi* in a concert, for presenting encapsulated versions of *Raga Alapanas* and for attempting to include something for everybody in his concerts. Such changes, introduced just about a hundred years ago, constitute the bulk of today's tradition. The increased reliance on sound amplification in conjunction with violin accompaniment has meant that the voice in

Carnatic music has changed. Someone whose natural voice output resembles that of Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar or K B Sundarambal would be quite unsuited for the Carnatic music being presented today. The demise of Carnatic music concerts being presented in the open setting of a temple or palace courtyard means that Nadaswaram music is dying out and this has adversely affected the quality of Nadaswaram music as well. A hundred years ago, vocalists tried to emulate the Nadaswaram stalwarts of the time, who could be found in every village that had a decent sized temple. Today, good Nadaswaram players are increasingly becoming a rarity, while vocalists are trying to emulate the violin in their voices.

However, it is not as if other Carnatic musicians have all started presenting highly refined music like that of T Brinda. It could be argued that today's sophisticated technology for sound amplification can be used to great advantage for sensitive and nuanced music, but by and large, musicians who do this are few and far between. As things stand, mikes seem to exist in Carnatic music for no other reason than to increase the volume output, often to deafening proportions. No concert, whether in India or elsewhere, is complete without a squeal or a boom emanating from the house speakers or stage monitors and in many such cases, the reason this happens is the performing musician's never ending quest for more volume. Another way in which technology is drastically changing the nature of Carnatic music is the emergence of the electronic Sruti box, which has caused the acoustic Tambura to become nothing more than a showpiece item in living rooms. The first few iterations of the electronic Sruti box, which were eagerly taken up by Carnatic musicians and aficionados, have resulted in a general loss to fidelity to Sruti. One yearns to hear once again that perfection in pitch that was the hallmark of Madurai Mani Iyer. Musicians who are brilliant in all other aspects of Carnatic music seem to be unable to produce that refinement in Sruti alignment that would make a huge difference to their art. Hopefully, with the newer and improved electronic Sruti boxes available nowadays, as well as Tambura apps for the iPhone and Android devices, this quality will improve among the current generation of music students.

Finally, a few thoughts on the instruments used in Carnatic music. We have embraced the violin, but the world of Carnatic music has so far proved incapable of manufacturing decent violins and accessories. The Veena has benefited from developments in amplification technology, but takers for the instrument are few and far between. In the meantime, people who know how to make a good Veena or to reset its fretboard periodically are fast dwindling in numbers. Other instruments native to Carnatic music, like Nadaswaram and Taval are also facing the brunt of social change, while we attempt to produce Carnatic music on instruments like the saxophone, clarinet, mandolin, guitar and even the electronic keyboard. I am all for the ingenuity that seeks to adapt these Western instruments to our musical idiom, but the lack of cultural interest in sustaining the accessory skill sets that are rooted in the historical milieu of our own music bothers me. In the year 2112, will Carnatic music be defined by the human voice, along with a host of instruments that originated in European musical history? Time will tell.

Vidyasankar Sundareshan is a chemical engineer by profession. He is an avid music enthusiast and a past President of Sruti.

Madurai Mani Iyer – A Personal Tribute

V.K.Balasubrahmanyam

(This article first appeared in the edition of Sruti Ranjani published in 1997)

It is with some reluctance that I am writing this article as I have often felt turned off by the writings of music critics, who pen reviews and anecdotal accounts of famous musicians. Their insufferable pretence of belonging to a superior species and throwing superficial comments about some truly great men and women of our times has annoyed me endlessly. I believe that the only useful contribution I can attempt is to pay tribute to such outstanding persons. In this article, I shall try to do so by gathering my thoughts on Madurai Mani Iyer.

Madurai Mani Iyer (M.M) lived during a time, which can be easily called the Golden age of Carnatic music performers. With musicians of the caliber of Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, G.N.B., and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, one needed tremendous talent to be recognized as a first rate performer. M.M. blossomed and won a pre-eminent position during this period by developing a unique style of his own. He acquired a loyal and devoted following of numberless rasikas due to his refreshingly original presentation of Carnatic music to an audience consisting of the elite in society as well as the common folk, uninitiated in the intricacies of Carnatic music. The diversity of his admirers perhaps set him apart from the other giants of his day with patrons belonging only to the



upper class. While every one of the coveted top honors in the performing field (such as the Sangita Kalanidhi, the Presidential award, etc.) were his own by right, the devotion and affection of millions of music lovers were his own.

Continuing on this topic of the obvious difference that characterized M.M, one has only to recollect the utter simplicity of his concert dress. While Jarigai veshti-angavastrams[zari dhoti], diamond earrings and profusion of gold chains etc. were so common in those days, M.M.'s typical kacheri[concert] dress was a white khadi shirt and a four-cubit dhoti. Has anyone ever seen M.M keep talam by banging his thighs vigorously and noisily? There was a gentleness and grace in his stage manners, which is still a lesson for performers today.

Music was central in his concerts and never ostentatious showmanship. The secret of his success can be traced to the ease with which he emphasized the true fundamental values of Carnatic music – Sruti-laya suddham and manodharma sangitam. A traditional account of a music vidwan is supposed to give details of his parentage, gurus, etc. I think that in the case of a genius of this stature of M.M., these factual data are irrelevant having no explanatory value. He was unique gift to the world of Carnatic

music and his contributions are entirely due to his own intense explorations into the subtle depths of Carnatic music

M.M.'s music displayed a wholesome blend of the respect for tradition and innovation. His concerts starting often with Dikshitar's Vatapi (Hamsadhvani) or Vallabha (Begada) were incomparably thrilling even though one has heard these pieces many times. The attempt to come to terms with transcendental values represented by phrases and concepts such as "Muladhara kshetra stittam" or Nirantharam" within the confines of the sapta swaras with the free flowing swara prastharas were the introduction to approach the infinite through finite symbols. The hypnotic effect on the audience right from the beginning of the concert should be seen to appreciate the effect of sounds with sruthi, laya and sahithyam with deep mystic connection (and not dictionary meanings). There are many levels of consciousness to which a great musician like M.M. has access.

Many vocalists need to settle down – (opening the voice with varnams, indulging in practice in several speeds) and take their own time to feel at ease before attempting serious music. For M.M. with his whole life centered in music, there was never a need to settle down. Every moment was appropriate and there was a never a let up in the tempo of the concert from beginning to end. He had his own unique pace (Nadai) for rendering each song and Bhava flowed resulting in a haunting melody for his listeners. The seamless blending of melody and rhythm that he achieved was never to be seen in any other performances of even the greatest of his contemporaries. They may overwhelm you with great melody or great rhythm but did not achieve the perfect blend of rhythm and melody so characteristic of M.M.

The tempo of M.M.'s concert was set by the opening song and as remarked before, lasted right up to the very end. Many musicians have difficulty in achieving the even keel. M.M.'s success was due to his natural rendering – (no strains due to loud shouting, beating thighs vigorously and other theatrical extravaganzas).

He used to sing the Navagraha Krithis quite regularly. The musical appeal of these krithis is not easily explained. I feel that human life is intimately connected with the solar system and these mysterious connections are explored by science and the arts in many ways. Dikshitar also explores this archetypical connection (in Jung's language). In M.M.'s rendering of these krithis, I have often felt transported to new realms of awareness – (in Thevaram's words *Kandariyadana kandome*) – I have to confess that the complete import of these krithis still manages to elude comprehension.

M.M.'s expositions of the grand (Ghana!) ragas as well as the apoorva ragas of Carnatic music were characterized by intense explorations of the myriad unexpected possibilities in a field accessible only to a genius. I had an opportunity to listen to his words regarding this subject. He told me that a concert without these ragas, for example Kalyani, Thodi, Kambodhi, or Sankarabharanam will not have weight.

The scope of these ragas to present ever new nuances, while being rendered so often by so many has always been a source of joy and wonder. While thinking on Kambodhi, can anyone who has heard M.M.'s *Ma Janaki* or *Kana Kan Kodi* ever forget the impact made on him? After hearing his Niraval "*Manickam, Vairam, Vaiduriam*" or "*Kalinil Silambu Konja*" even once, can any other rendering appeal to the listener. The magic of his rendering used to speed up

the heart beat of the audience – a phenomenon for which no explanation other than the concept of resonance of Nada present in everyone, seem adequate to me.

Bhairavi as expounded by M.M (for example Koluva) was truly phenomenal. Many good musicians sing Bhairavi. On close examination, one detects a certain sadness in many renderings. It was only after listening to M.M.'s Bhairavi that I could discover the happy under-tones of that great raga. M.M. explored the entire Bhava of the raga and not the obvious surface features only.

Mohanam from M.M. (example Kapali, Mohana Rama etc) has been commented upon by such a great musician as Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer who used to call him Mohana Mani (M.M). Recalling the fact that Maharajapuram's Mohanam was considered the high water mark of his times, one can appreciate the depth of this tribute earned by M.M. in the land of giants.

M.M.'s popularizations of relatively unknown krithis such as Sarasa Sama Dhana and Nada Tanum Anisam is very well known. If the beginning of the concert was inspiring, the end with Vellai Thamarai (Bhimplas), Karpagame (Madhyamavathi) and the English note was thrilling indeed.

How did M.M. achieve his status of immortality? The shunning of manipulation – (political power, economic consideration) was total in his life. His gifted voice and genius sought to represent the best of Carnatic music in a straightforward and seemingly simple manner. The trappings of the now too common mechanically rendered, pre-calculated “Kanakkus” with the sole purpose of impressing the audience were completely absent in his concerts. M.M. enjoyed good music and sharing it with one and all. He never made compromises to suit any pressure group. With commercial and political considerations absent from his horizons, he gave what he wanted to give. His Sarvalaghu swaras and brilliant Niravals were true and original characteristics of his style. The constant and noisy competition with the accompanists was never seen in his concerts. He encouraged young and promising accompanists to blossom and give their best in the concerts.

It is said that the highest goal of Carnatic music is to realize “Nada Brahman” – an experience in which the individual self merges with the universal self. The closest that I can visualize this goal and feel even a preliminary aspect of this profound experience has been only in the concerts of M.M. the superb Nada Yogi. There have been other musicians who have entertained us. They may have even helped us to escape the day to day crude, mundane and competitive life. They may have helped us to have a good time. But M.M. alone could make me realize that the world of Carnatic music is full of deeper meanings undreamed of. I thank my stars that I lived during M.M.'s time and listened to his music.

V.K. Balasubrahmanyam is a retired astrophysicist from NASA. He now lives with his wife Saroja in Minnesota. They were both very close friends of Shri Madurai Mani Iyer.

Dr. Sripada Pinakapani – A Brief Biography

Bhaskari and Sindhu Budhavarapu



Language is the dress of thought, said a great thinker. “Music is the dance of sound,” is a one line self-portrait of the great Dr. Sripada Pinakapani Garu. Dr. Sripada Pinakapani was named a Century-Maker in Carnatic Music by Sruti magazine (from Chennai, India) during the 20th century. Pani Garu pursued music side by side with his study and practice of medicine. He made phenomenal efforts to share his own knowledge and insights with his students and with the large community of scholars and musicians through his books.

Pani Garu perfectly understood so many different styles, with devotion, incisive intellect and intense effort. He made efforts to study the different branches of classical music deeply and assimilated them into himself. He is a *Gana Rishi*, a savant of music, born and living for the divine cause of our heavenly music.

Pani Garu was born on 3 August 1913 in the village of Priyagraham in Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh, India. His father Sripada Kameswara Rao was a junior professor of education at Government Training College in Rajahmundry. His father was deeply

involved in theatre. Music was part of the atmosphere in which Pani Garu grew up. His father had arranged music tuition for Pani Garu's sister by B.S Lakshmana Rao. He would sit by his sister and always listen during the tuition. It was Pani Garu's first time being exposed to classical music.

One day when his sister happened to make a mistake, he blurted out "That's wrong!" The teacher asked him to sing the phrase correctly. When he sang, the teacher was very impressed and suggested to Pani Garu's parents that he should also be taught music. His parents agreed, but Pani Garu didn't. He told his mother Jogamma: "I am not a girl to learn music." But, she asked him: "Is the teacher not a man?" So Pani Garu started taking lessons in 1924. Lakshmana Rao possessed very good knowledge in music. He did not perform the creative aspects of music like *raga alapana* and *swara kalpana*, but he knew *kritis* really well.

Pani Garu finished music training by the time he completed high school studies in Rajahmundry in 1929. Pani Garu was exposed to the music of Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar and Kanchipuram Naina Pillai who were both vocalists. Pani Garu was particularly impressed by Govindswamy Pillai, a violinist. He listened to them very carefully. Pani Garu had this ability to repeat exactly whatever he heard. Without being aware, he was imbibing the characteristics of the music of the great musicians in the south (mostly Tamil speaking areas.) Pani Garu found that those kind of performances were far more interesting from beginning to end than the performances of Andhra musicians. He wanted to acquire that particular style, so that he could establish it in Andhra. That was his ambition at the age of 15. Pani Garu used to maintain a diary to write down any impressions of the music he heard. He developed a unique style of singing which is now regarded as "Pani's" bani

Pani Garu joined the medical college in Visakhapatnam. During this time, he learned music on his own. He would practice in the college veranda and on the beach. When Pani Garu was studying for his degree he didn't touch music for a couple of months. Even as he was studying for his medical degree he was invited to sing at different sabhas in towns in Andhra for the Thyagaraja Utsavam and during the Ganapathi and Navaratri festivals. Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu Garu who was a great violinist of that era, gave the go ahead and also suggested accompanists for him. Pani Garu passed his MBBS in 1939 and served as a house-surgeon in 1940.

Pani Garu continued to perform and teach music all through his medical career and after he retired from the medical profession. But he didn't get many opportunities to give performances in Madras. However, The Madras Music Academy invited him to preside over the annual music conference in 1983.

Along with giving performances, he devoted time to teaching and writing books that he felt would help aid and improve the learning process for the students. He composed some pieces on his own and set to music the compositions of others. There are 6 *Varnams* which are entirely his own work, and he tuned 108 *keertanas* of Annamacharya. Pani Garu had 3 main disciples that stayed in his house and learned music from him. His many disciples include Nedunuri Krishnamurthy, Voleti Venkateshvarulu, Malladi Suri Babu and his sons Malladi Sriram Prasad, Malladi Ravi Kumar who are now well known as the Malladi brothers.

Dr. Sripada Pinakapani Garu received many honors, including the *Sangeeta Kalanidhi* given by the Madras Music Academy. He was honored with the Padma Bhushan award by the President of India in 1984. He has had 100 years of glorious and productive life.

We humbly join all his numerous disciples and admirers and pray for many more years of good health to Pani Garu.

Bhaskari is a junior at CB South high school and Sindhu is a 7th grader at Unami middle school. Bhaskari and Sindhu have both been learning Carnatic music from Prabha Subramaniam for the past 5 years. They also have recently started learning from the Malladi Brothers for the past 1 year.

Sri vOIEti venkaTESwarlu gAru – Man of Transcendent Music *Prabhakar Chitrapu*

It was many years ago, probably in the late eighties. I was still an early entrant into the field of Carnatic Music. M. Balamuralikrishna and M.S. Subbulakshmi were my gateways into this field and I had not gone much further. A good friend of ours, Mani Subramaniam, recognizing the situation gave me a couple of cassette recordings, suggesting that I go past the gateways and expand my horizons. One of these was a recording of vOIEti venkaTESwarlu, a name that I just heard for the first time. The recordings included elaborate renderings of Thyagaraja kritis, ninnE nera

namminAnurA in raga pantuvarALi, mOhanarAma in rAga mOhana, ETi janmamu in raga varALi etc. The recording quality was rather poor and the words were hard to decipher. Yet they made a lasting impression in my mind and heart, and today I can say without a doubt that Sri vOIEti gAru's music is the one I enjoy most among Carnatic male singers.



Since that fateful time when I first heard the rusty recordings of mOhanarAma etc, I tried to collect more of his recordings, but they were hard to come by. There was only one pre-recorded commercial cassette of him that I could lay my hands on. It was a garland of annamAcArya kIrtanas. I only managed to add very slowly to my collection from friends and relatives over the years, until very recently, when I had the good fortune to spend some quality time chatting with the mallAdi brothers. They were generous beyond words to share with me their enormous gold mine of their personal collection of vOIEti gAru's music. Thanks to the global connectivity between friends, family and strangers that is made possible by the Internet, there is more of his music available to everyone. The commercial Carnatic music industry has woken up to recognize this diamond of music and has begun

to make available to music lovers his music. There are also a couple of video recordings on the Internet. I shall provide a list of links at the end of this article.

I chose the title of this article to say 'transcendent music' on purpose. When I hear his music, I feel transported to a higher world and a plane, where the world of various pettinesses has disappeared and I am alone with music. The music carries and sways and uplifts the Self with intoxicating effects. I do find it to be truly transcendent.

I would like to share a few of my personal impressions, before compiling information about vOIEti gAru from external sources. I used to find that the Thyagaraja kriti durmArgacara in rAga ranjani occurred often in his renditions that were available to me. I later read in external sources that it was one of his favorite ragas as well. But I used to wonder whether it was also because he liked the meaning of that song. By all accounts, vOIEti gAru was a very simple man, and did not pursue fame and position. The meaning of the song would be appealing to such a man, as it dismisses the lowly men that were rulers and bosses.

Another raga that he would extract the delicate beauty from is pantuvarALi. His AlApanas would take one into a reverie and of course, mention must be made of the golden touches on Hindusthani-styled musical phrases into which the AlApana would glide into and back again. Such sojourns could send a thrill and a chill, as if taking a sharp turn and coming face to face with an immense beauty of a sunset or a person. One is also reminded of an old famous English sonnet by Keats called "On first looking into Chapman's Homer", wherein Keats likens the thrill of finding the beauty in Chapman's translation of Homer to that of an astronomer suddenly discovering a new planet in his searching telescope. Many people have commented on this unique capability of vOIEti gAru in blending Hindusthani styled music in right proportions and at the right contexts.

Thanks to the generosity of mallAdi brothers, I have a unique recording of vOIEti gAru as he sang a full 2 hour 'concert' at his own home, with no other accompaniments in the background than a simple Sruti box and noises of the household, such as a cawing of a crow, purring of a passing motor cycle, or a wandering mendicant. Apparently, vOIEti gAru did not need the stage of a famous sabha and a cultured rasika audience to pour out the very best music – music that he must have created and delivered for no one else than to music itself. One may call it nAdOpAsana or an offering to Mother saraswati!

It was only after I got to love vOIEti gAru's music that I realized the he was no more and that I would never have a chance to hear him live. It was in a strange context that I was drawn towards his living family during one of those years. One of our friends has mentioned that after his death, his wife, Smt. vOIEti vijayalakshmi gAru, ran into financial difficulties and that vOIEti's music fans were conducting some fund raising concerts. Deeply saddened, I contributed a little of my own. She had also passed away a few years later.

I would like to now present some information that I collected from a number of public sources, which are cited at the end of the article.

Musical Training:

Sri vOIEti venkaTESwarlu (27 Aug 1928 to 29 Dec 1989, 61 years) was born in Rajahmundry, a mid-sized town in Andhra Pradesh on the banks of the majestic gOdAvari river that spans almost 3 km in width. Rajahmundry has always been a seat of literary, cultural and political activity and fame over the centuries. In such an intellectually vibrant place, the young vOIEti began his musical journey at the tender age of 5. vOIEti had his initial training from caturvEdula acyutarAmayya SAstri and achieved swarajnAnam under munuganTi venkaT rAo pantulu of kAkinADa by studying under him for 10 years. He later graduated in music from Andhra University. Subsequently, under the guidance of Sangita Kalanidhi, Dr. SripAda pinAkapANi he refined his style over a short period of 3 years.

Dr. pinAkapANni had said, "He was a disciple of mine all right, but what a genius! You can describe him as one of the best musicians of Andhra ever. I wonder whether we will ever get another musician like that". pinAkapANi knew vOIEti's capacity to quickly grasp any musical passage he heard, write it down in notation and then breathe life into the notes while rendering the passage.

Music as Profession:

Music was also vOIEti gAru's profession. vOIEti joined All India Radio, Vijayawada in 1951 and served as a producer of Carnatic music from 1966 onwards, eventually retiring early in 1978. He ushered in the Golden era of music in AkASavANi, in close association with Dr. bAlAntrapu rajanIkAnta rAo. Amongst his various contributions at the AIR Vijayawada radio station, programs called bhaktiranjani and sangIta SikshaNa were popular and famous. I distinctly remember waking up to the former programs, which were devotional music programs broadcast every morning at 6:30AM. The latter forms a central and defining aspect of Sri vOIEti gAru's life, and deserves a separate treatment, which I shall do in the next section.

vOIEti venkaTESwarlu's mellifluous, resonant bass voice and modest demeanor made him a connoisseur's favorite among the great singers of Carnatic classical devotional music. Many considered him as a musicians' musician. His musical career, though comparatively short lived, was a model of dignity, dedication and detachment.

"sangIta SikshaNa" program¹:

sangIta SikshaNa is the name of an AIR program that was started by Sri vOIEti gAru in Vijayawada radio station and successfully ran it for nearly 20 years from 1958 to 1978! As the name suggests, these were music learning sessions and were broadcast in 30 minute segments on Wednesdays and Fridays of every week. The program would be re-broadcast over other AIR stations in Andhra Pradesh, namely Cadapa, Vizag and Hyderabad.

The program itself was indeed an innovative idea to use the broadcast radio medium to teach classical Carnatic music during such early days of the technology. It was also a unique concept that I do not believe was implemented anywhere else in at least South India. One may wonder how effective learning by listening to a radio program can be. Indeed, even during these hi-tech days of tele-instruction via phone and Skype, we find that there is no substitute to face-to-face learning from a good teacher. So, the sangIta SikshaNa programs were clearly meant for advanced students or budding musicians, who already have a fair knowledge of the various rAgas.

The program was structured as vOIEti gAru teaching a student in real time. The initial student was one N.C. jagannAtha Sarma, and soon changed to Sri mallAdi sUribAbu gAru, who remained the 'student' for most of the 20 years of the program.

During this time, vOIEti gAru taught over 250 kritis, painstakingly preparing precise notations (including fine anuswaras) for all of them. Notation writing at that level of granularity was and still is an uncommon, difficult but accurate method of transcribing and preserving Carnatic music. These books are still in the possession of Sri sUribAbu gAru², but most of the music is not preserved! The unfortunate reason is that during those days, recording media (such as spool tapes) were expensive (even for state funded AIR station!), so that new lessons would be recorded over the previous ones, and thereby losing them forever.

However, the music, of course, lives through the people that listened to and learned from these programs. Foremost among these is Sri mallAdi sUribAbu gAru himself, who in turn taught most of these 250 kritis to his sons Ravikumar

¹ Many of the details on this section are from a telephone interview of Sri mallAdi sUribAbu gAru, by Prabhakar Chitrapu on Nov 16, 2012

² sUribAbu gAru hopes to publish them when he succeeds in collecting enough funds for the project. If you are interested in the project, please contact me at chitrapu1955@gmail.com.

& Sriramaprasad (popularly known as the ‘mallAdi brothers), who delight many rasikas over the world with their music and concerts.

But the reach of the broadcast medium is so vast that it is difficult to know where else vOIEti gAru’s music may have taken root thanks to sangIta SikshaNA. One example is told through an anecdote from Sri sUribAbu gAru. Apparently, once he was accompanying vOIEti gAru to Cochin in Kerala for a sangIta sammELana concert. A fan of vOIEti gAru and a local tea estate owner invited them for dinner and told them that he had listened to the recording of sangIta SikshaNA, made by a friend in Hyderabad. He was so fascinated by it that he learnt it himself and is having it taught in his music school!

Finally, a few words on why I devoted a separate section to this topic. The short reason is that this program was very dear to vOIEti gAru’s heart. Apparently, he gave it even more importance than giving concerts itself! So much so, that he preferred to take early retirement at Vijayawada AIR station than to give up teaching music via that program. Subsequently, vOIEti gAru went to Hyderabad to live with his daughters, and attempted to bring the program to Hyderabad AIR programming. Alas, that was not to be, as he breathed his last soon afterwards. It may not be an exaggeration to wonder that he could not bear to live his life any longer without doing what he loved most – teaching divine music to all who would listen selflessly and generously.

His Music:

Sri vOIEti possessed the finest qualities of musical ability to sing with ease in three octaves, with absolutely pure Sruti and perfect laya. His voice is fruity, rich and sonorous, his style elegant. His favorite ragas, they say, were varALi, ranjani, bEgaDa, pantuvarALi, hamsanandi, and hindOLam, in addition, of course, to major ragas such as tOdi, kharaharapriya, kaLyANi, pUrvikaLyANi etc. And he treated small rAgas such as balahamsa, Ranjani, pUrNacandrika etc with the same disciplined approach as he did for elaborate rAgas such as sAvEri, kambhOji, tOdi, kaLyANi etc.

In his concerts, he mostly sang kritis of Thyagaraja, one or two compositions of muthuswAmi dIkshita, Syama Sastri, paTnam subramania iyer and tanjAvUr ponnaiah pillai. In addition, he also sang AdhyAtma rAmAyaNa kIrtanas, sadASiva brahmEndra compositions, narAyaNa tIrtha tarangams, kshEtrayya padams, jAvalis, kUcipUDi yakshagAnam etc.

Sri vOIEti’s music is unique in the field of Carnatic music, in that his style represents both the Carnatic tradition as well as Hindustani. vOIEti loved Hindustani music and ghazals and would listen for hours to the music of artists like baDE ghulAm alI khAn, mehdI hasan and many others on the popular Indian radio station vividh bhArati. He never formally learnt it from any teacher and yet mastered it so well that he would often interject Hindustani idiom towards the conclusion of a raga alapana, raising some eyebrows but delighting many others. In fact, Sri vOIEti excelled in the Hindustani style to such an extent that he could please famous musicians like baDE ghulAm alI khAn et al. In fact, sometimes, he used to be referred to as the "baDE ghulAm of the South".

vOIEti exulted most in being accompanied by Maestros vellOre rAmabhadran, danDamUDI rAmMohan rAo and karaikuDi maNi. Sangeetha Vidhwan mallAdi sUribAbu gAru, father of mallAdi brothers, imbibes vOIEti style.

The awards include the Sangeetha Nataka academy award, sangIta cUDamaNi, Sur Singar among others. Among the senior musicians he had high regard for include, ariyakUDI rAmAnuja iyengAr and Ustad baDE ghulAm alI khAn. Their pictures adorned the living room of his home in Vijayawada. In particular, vOIEti gAru had a special liking for Sri rangarAmAnuja aiyangAr (disciple of vINa dhanammAl and author of the Tamil musical work ‘kriti manimalai’) for his excellent rendition and creation of rare and supreme swara patterns while singing kritis.

Personal Aspects:

It is known that this giant of a person was an extremely simple, humble and modest man. A simple, warm and unassuming person, vOIEti never craved for awards and accolades. He was a teacher at heart and a musician for music itself. Rare indeed is a person who does not care to gather fame and prosperity with his/her talents, but only seeks to propagate the talent and delight others along the way.

vOIEti gAru was a man of soft nature, pleasing humility and an embodiment of simplicity. He would often be praising the eminence of other musicians and never found fault or made undue comments on others.

He was an early riser and his favorite occasion for music practice was brahma muhUrtam. An interesting personal aspect is that after a concert, vOIEti loved to eat *pessarattus*(green gram pancakes), which his wife readily served him. She was his life-long shadow quietly enabling him to immerse his soul in his love for music, which he did for neither gain nor expectation.

Prabhakar is a long time supporter of SRUTI and has served the organization in various capacities since its inception. An engineer by profession, Prabhakar has deep interest in classical music and literature and contributes his views frequently to Sruti publications.

References:

[0] Telephone Interview of Sri Malladi Suribabu garu by Prabhakar Chitrapu, 2012 Nov 16.

[1] Blog of Ms. Sailaja, grand-daughter of Sri vOIEti venkatEswarlu,

<http://mynrimusings.blogspot.com/2008/05/sri-vOIEti-venkateswarlu.html>

[2] <http://lokabhiramam.blogspot.com/2009/11/vOIEti-venakteswarlu-vocal.html>

[3] <http://swaramaadhuri.weebly.com/vOIEti-venkateswarlu.html>

[4] Review by P. Surya Rao of VOIEti Venkateswarlu's Jayanthi concert by Malladi Suribabu, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-fridayreview/article3867922.ece>

[5] <http://www.apsara-media.com/VOIEti%20and%20Friends.html>

[6] YouTube Video channel of 'vintageaudio54'

Sri Sankara guruvaram-nAgaswarALi http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxnB6b9Ugv4&feature=youtube_gdata_player
vagalADi-bEhAg

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8_UGjNAFxQ&feature=plcp

[7] YouTube Video channel of 'Musique4ever' by rAmavarma

paTTi viDuvarAdu-manjari-tyAgarAja

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPAolTGAnIE&feature=related>

nI cittamu-dhanyAsi-tyAgarAja

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OW6CVXooBhY&feature=related>

buddhi rAdu-SankarAbharaNam-tyAgarAja

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CAaM6zKOpI&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpvnblSN4Y&feature=related> (tAni by danDamUDi rAm mOhan rAo)

vanitarO (jAvaLi)-Anandabhairavi

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMmHILYowXw&feature=relmfu>

nAm bhajan kyOn chOD diyA? (hindusthani style bhajan)-kabir

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnPQjcnBBzE&feature=related>

[8] YouTube Video Channel of 'spicmacaytamu'

sarvam brahma mayam-madhuvanti

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnPQjcnBBzE&feature=related>

Brahmashri P.K. Rajagopala Iyer – A Tribute

Viswaram Janakiraman (Ramji)

Painganadu Rajagopala Iyer (P.K.Rajagopala Iyer) was born in 1913 in Kumbakonam, the son of P.R.Krishna Sastri of Painganadu. 2013 marks the centenary year of this multi-faceted musicologist, Sanskrit scholar, musician and teacher.

Sri.Rajagopala Iyer learnt vocal music from Tiger Varadachariar, Tanjavur Ponniah Pillai and Valadi Krishna Iyer. He also studied music theory under Prof. P.Sambamoorthy. His close association with veteran musicologists such as the late T.V.Subbarao, Prof.Sambamoorthy and the doyens of the practical art form like Tiger Varadachariar resulted in a culmination of the finer aspects of both musicology and practical music in him.He taught vocal music, theory and Sanskrit for over 40 years. He served as a lecturer in The Music Academy Teacher's College of Music and also served as the acting Principal at the institute. He was on the staff of Kalakshetra and was the principal of the Skanda Gana Vidyalaya, Ambattur. There was hardly any learned gathering on music without his active participation. He delivered many endowment lectures under the auspices of The Music Academy, Madras and was honored by the Academy with the T.T.K. Award in 1986 in recognition of his meritorious services to the cause of music and musicology. He was a

member of the Experts' Committee of The Music Academy. He was widely known for his expertise in singing Tiruppugazhs and his scholarly lecture demonstrations on the subject at several Universities.

A great devotee of Lord Skanda, Sri.Rajagopala Iyer also known as Kalikananda, was a disciple of Sri Vimalananda Natha, and authored a book on Kali worship entitled "Sri Kali Vidya Krama" in Sanskrit along with a full Tamil translation. Sri.Rajagopala Iyer was not only adept in Musicology (Science of Music) but also well versed in all Vedic



lore, Yogic and Manthra Sastras. His expositions and papers on Sama Veda and Music, Sanskrita and Sangita, Chanda Talas in Tiruppugazh and appreciation of the Vara and the Navavarana Kritis of Muthuswami Dikshitar published in the Journals of the Music Academy provide ample testimony to his erudition. He was also the first person to be entrusted with the translation of the musicology sections of the Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini under the leadership of Shri.T.S.Parthasarathy. He was a man of austere habits and led a simple life of orthodoxy.

As a teacher, Sri.Rajagopala Iyer has touched the lives of many well-known musicians and musicologists. Prof.S.R.Janakiraman (SRJ) was one of his pupils and was associated with him for more than 40 years. SRJ studied musicology under the master beginning in the 3rd year of his Sangeeta Siromani course in Kalakshetra in 1945. He recalls how Sri.Rajagopala Iyer emphasized the importance of inculcating in the students a good sense of taste in the study of musicology.

SRJ's discussions with Sri.Rajagopala Iyer on advanced topics pertaining to musicology continued even after his leaving Kalakshetra in 1949 and while he was a student in the Sangeeta Vidwan course in Central College of Music. Sri.Rajagopala Iyer encouraged students to develop a power of discrimination in what to assimilate in a treatise and what to honorably ignore. He remarked that Sangeeta Ratnakara is more a digest than a mere text. SRJ points out that

Sri.Rajagopala Iyer stressed he should delve into the details of the Raga Vivekadyaya Chapter of Sangeeta Saramrta but quickly peruse the rest of the contents as most of it was readily available in Sarangadeva's Sangeeta Ratnakara also. SRJ considers it an honor that he had the opportunity to imbibe the essence of musicology from such a great scholar.

Smt.Suguna Varadachari's first music lessons were from him and she still treasures the notebook of sarali-janta varisai, alankarams in janaka-janya ragas in his handwriting and fondly remembers the voice training exercises in the three octaves for akara sadhakam. Smt.Seetha Narayanan is another disciple who opined that he was not a performer but a great teacher who dedicated himself to that profession. His knowledge of Telugu and Sanskrit was commendable and he could render 'koniadina' and 'naa jeevadhara' beautifully." Dr.S.Sunder is another notable disciple of his.

Rajagopala Iyer was an eloquent speaker; musicians and rasikas alike used to eagerly look forward to his expert comments in music conferences. He had mastered the Tiruppugazh lore of Arunagirinathar and would elucidate and sing the hymns with great ecstasy. He was also a composer with a few compositions to his credit. Notable among them are "Thyagarajam bharaje citta" in the raga Karpoorabharani and a tana varnam "Sami ni" in Anandavalli and "chandrasedharendra sarasvatim manasa bhajare" in Cakravakam.

Courtesy: Some contents reproduced with permission from Prof.S.R.Janakiraman's "A miscellany of Essays"

Ramji is a Carnatic music enthusiast and is the son of noted musician & musicologist Professor S.R.Janakiraman. He works for Bank of America and lives in West Chester, PA.

In Memory of T.N. Bala ***Sumanth Swaminathan***

For nearly all of my life, I have known Sri T.N. Bala (who I refer to as Bala Mama) as a guru, a composer, and a passionate lover of music. I was eight years old when my parents first enrolled me in his vocal Carnatic music classes.

He was the most recognized and experienced music teacher in the Philadelphia area, and my mother and father were both members of his vast network of students. Bala mama had the resume of the consummate teacher: he studied with the best (one of the very early disciples of the late Ganakaladhara Madurai Mani Iyer), he had performed extensively in his life, and he had experience in teaching numerous students of all skill levels. In addition to being a talented vocalist, he was an accomplished composer (his most notable composition “Vilayada IdhuNerama”, in Shangumugapriya, was made a household name by the late Maharajapuram Santhanam) and he was a versatile instrumentalist with a knowledge of a variety of percussion, string, and keyed instruments.

When I met Bala mama in 1991, he was already a veteran musician with a multitude of distinctions. Moreover, he was an accomplished filmmaker, videographer, broadcast journalist, husband, and father of three children. For the Philadelphia community, and me however, T.N. Bala was first and foremost a teacher and promoter of Carnatic classical music. As a long time student of Bala Mama’s and a performing musician myself, it is easy for me to recognize the enormity of his influence on my life. He trained me in vocal Carnatic music from a young age, and he introduced me to Indian classical saxophone. He prepared and taught me all of the compositions for my debut saxophone concert in 1999. He accompanied me and my classmates on mridangam during his annual student recitals, and he played kanjeera/harmonium in many of my kutcheris. Moreover, he critiqued and guided my music for my entire life and up until the last days that he lived.



When Bala mama died, I lost a teacher, a creative inspiration, and a long time support. The extent to which that loss has been felt by the larger music community has been increasingly apparent with each passing day. After reconnecting with many of mama’s friends, admirers, and students, I heard similar sentiments to my own shared by admirers with varying artistic backgrounds. Vanitha Suresh, a teacher and promoter of Carnatic classical music in Madison, WI recalled about mama, “Bala mama was a guru, mentor, friend and father to me. I vividly remember Bala mama's parting words of wisdom when I moved from Philly to Madison in the year 2003: ‘Music might not seem very significant to you at this stage of your life, but you will turn to music for solace when you get older, so do not give up music!’ He encouraged me to teach music to young children. Whatever music I have imbibed and am imparting today is because of this great man.”

Today I take comfort in listening to Mama’s compositions and passing his musical conventions and renderings on to my own students. Bala mama’s life is a story of diverse endeavors that effected and transformed broad swaths of society. He was a great communicator and will be foremost remembered as a prolific musician, a zealous innovator, and a devoted teacher. I personally count myself as one of the very fortunate to have been a part of his life.

Sumanth Swaminathan, Ph.D is a Carnatic saxophone performer and teacher in the greater Philadelphia and Wilmington areas. He currently works for W.L. Gore & associates as an analytics and modeling consultant.

Blessings from a Legend ***Bhaskari & Sindhu Budhavarapu***

During our visit to India in Aug 2012, we had a rare opportunity to visit and seek the blessings of the Legend, Padma Bhushan, Sangitha Kalanidhi Dr. Sripada Pinaka Pani garu, fondly called as Pani Garu. Our teachers Malladi Brothers, Sri Rama Prasad & Ravi Kumar suggested that we visit Pani garu, who is hailed as Guru of Gurus (his disciples include Nedunuri Krishnamurthy, Voleti Venkateswarlu, Malladi Brothers and many more) and also be part of his 100th birthday celebrations. But our India trip was planned with a tight schedule and we were supposed to return to USA at the end of July. When we discussed this with our teacher Prabha Subramaniam here in the US, she insisted we seek the blessings of Pani garu irrespective of the cost. We ended up changing our schedule and visited the legend. We are glad we did that. We could be regretting forever if we did not adhere to her advice.

Dr Pani is a true legend who practiced and taught music in its purest form and always insisted that music be practiced and taught without sacrificing the rich style and beauty to the consumerist interests of the present day. We could get that feeling when we interacted with him.

When we went to his house in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, we were told that we had half an hour to see him and could sing one or two songs and get his blessings and not to disturb. Dr Pani was almost 100 year old and confined to bed because of health conditions. When we sang an Annamacharya Keerthana (Vaade Venkatadhiri, Vasantha) tuned by him, he started to hum with us and corrected a couple of mistakes and asked us to sing the corrected version. That interaction lasted for two hours (we sang many other varnams and keerthanas) and he suggested how to practice, what to ask teachers and the way music needs to be pursued. Though physically he was confined to bed, mentally he was strong and reacted to music and as his son put it, good music gives him strength. We felt elated when we were told that he usually spends only about half an hour with young students but we had ended up getting his guidance and ears for almost two hours. We were ecstatic when this legend of his stature told us that our voice was sweet and we were singing what was taught and we should continue learning music.

As an accomplished artist at his birthday celebrations said, many of us were not even qualified to talk about legends like Dr Pani garu. Hence here is a quote from another great musician and his disciple Nedunuri Krishnamurthy about Dr Pani: “If Thyagaraja aimed at purifying the society and human life with ‘shastriya sangeetam’, my guru, Pinakapani’s single-point agenda was to leave a vast treasure of music knowledge to posterity, lest it get lost with just one generation”. He composed many songs, wrote many books on music notable of which are five volumes of Sangitha Saurabham which are treasured by students and teachers of Carnatic music. He is one of the few rare gems who had achieved great heights in two disciplines. He is a legendary musician as well as a Professor of medicine. He retired as head of Kurnool Medical college. He always practiced what he preached about not teaching music for money. He had disciples in his house for months together and learnt music. One action which tells about him: He gave away all gold medals he got to Bhadrachalam temple so, they can make vaddanam for Seethamma varu in that temple. When TTD gave him 10 lakh rupees (which is a huge sum in India) and a gold Kankanam, he immediately donated them for Anna Danam in Tirumala temple. Such is the magnanimity of his personality. We truly felt blessed to spend a couple of hours with that legend and seek his blessings.

He is a strong believer in self learning and insists that every student of music should be able to read and write notations for the music they listen to and practice. That is one suggestion we hope we would be able to practice some day. To conclude, the word of legend himself in an interview with Hindu news paper couple of years ago. “I wanted perfect music to be learnt and sung. That was my sole aim; all else fell into place. Bhakti in classical music cannot be at the cost of losing out on the traditions of grammar and syntax that make music. It is a tight framework which cannot be tampered with; perfection makes a man perfect”.

A Maestro in fine mettle

Rajee Raman

With much anticipation in air, Sanjay Subrahmanyam commenced his USA concert tour with a program for Sruti, accompanied by S.Varadarajan on the violin and Neyveli B.Venkatesh on the mridangam. The event was held at the Great Valley High School auditorium on September 15th.



Not many would start a concert with a rare Nilambari Ata tala varnam, but we have come to expect the unexpected from Sanjay and he did not disappoint. Neevanti Deivamuledani, a composition of Tarangambadi Panchanada Iyer, showcases Nilambari in its entire splendor, including the beautiful PNDN phrase with the kaishiki (lower) nishadam making the occasional appearance to great effect. Swati Tirunal’s Kanada composition, Mamavasadanani followed. A round of swarams was sung ending in the khanda pattern – GG,MRSR,S, NN,SNPN,P, GG,MRSR,S,. A raga alapana replete with dattu phrases preceded another rare composition- Maruvakudayya Mohananga Naapai in Mohanam, a Garbhapurivasar

composition. In the charanam, Sanjay held on to his trademark four avaratanam karvai at the tara shadjam. A voice that hits the perfect Sa and merges with the tambura drone completely for four avartanam creates such an electrifying effect and Sanjay exploits this fully. Kalpanaswarams with vakra endings were met with Varadarajan's equally interesting response on the violin.

Sanjay sketched an outline of Mukhari before singing the magnificent Thyagaraja krithi Karubaru in all its glory. Neyveli Venkatesh played very sensitively and his gumukki added a nice touch to the krithi. Mukhari was just a precursor to an hour long, exhaustive Sankarabharanam. In the alapana, Varadarajan on the violin shadowed Sanjay as he explored the depths of the SRGM notes in the lower quadrant of the ragam in 'Umkaram'.

In Sanjay's alapana, one can notice how open-mouthed enunciations of akaarams interspersed with lightning speed brigas bring about much color and vibrancy to the raga. Dikshitar's masterpiece Akshayalinga Vibho, replete in "prasas" (multisyllabic alliterations), set in Mishra Chappu followed - the highlight of which was a classic Neraval in both slow and medium tempos at Badarivanamula. Here again, Venkatesh's deft touches added a great deal of musical value. Sanjay showed his command in the laya aspect in the kalpanaswarams with the nadai variations he did for the motif "GM,P,MG, RG,S,RG,". Neyveli Venkatesh's energetic tani avartanam, with tisram and khandam variations, capped a sumptuous feast of Sankarabharanam.

A change of gears was in order and a galloping Tillai Chidambaram in Kapi Narayani was the song of choice. Sanjay started an alapana that signaled that he was taking up Abheri for a Ragam Tanam Pallavi exposition. In the alapana, Sanjay sang incredibly creative phrases with deceptive ease. Varadarajan proved his equal, with a return on the violin that was as rich in tone as it was in musical content. In the Taanam, Sanjay did not let a couple of slips distract him from presenting an interesting mix of tempos and patterns that included one instance where he simulated the Veena with his voice. Maybe that was a hint to the Pallavi with the famous lyrics of Subramanya Bharathi – Vellai Taamarai Poovil Iruppal Veenai Seiyum Oliyil Iruppal!

The Pallavi was set in two kalai Adi Talam, with the eduppu after one aksharam and arudi of three aksharams. A ragamalika of kalpanaswarams – in Purnachandrika, Hamirkalyani and Chalanattai- was followed up with a short trikalam. Varadarajan's responses were superlative.

Edayyagati Enakku, the Koteeshwara Iyer composition in the vivadi mela Chalanattai, was followed by a poignant Subhapanthuvrali. Purandaradasa's Ennarakshiso was the emotional highpoint of the evening. Uppum Karpuram in Behag came after the moving Ramalinga Adigal Viruttam Pettrathaitanai, sung in Kambodhi.

Sanjay concluded the concert as he had begun - in Nilambari - with Kulasekhara Azhwar's Divyaprabhandam, Mannumpukazh kosalai, a ragamalika lullaby beginning with Durga and ending in Nilambari.

Sanjay is not only an intelligent musician with a mastery of musical expression but also a highly creative artist with so many musical arsenals in his possession that he so effectively deploys at chosen intervals to dazzling effect. Varadarajan has distinguished himself as a sensitive violinist whose musical dialogues with the vocalist spurs both of them to further heights. Venkatesh's mridangam is consistently energetic and enhances the music to a great extent. The way Sanjay has formed a cohesive team comprising such talented artists as Varadarajan and Venkatesh ensured a very successful and satisfying performance.

Rajee Raman is an avid rasika of Carnatic Music. She lives in Exton, PA with her husband and son.

SRUTI Celebrates T. Brinda's Centennial Year: An Appreciation

Uma Prabhakar & Prabhakar Chitrapu

Sangita Kalanidhi Thanjavur Brinda (1912-1996), granddaughter of Vina Dhanammal fondly referred to as Brindamma, represents the seventh generation of an impeccable lineage of musicians. Most well known for her sublime rendition of padams of Kshetrappa drawn out in a stately, majestic, elephantine movement, and also jaavalis in a more sprightly mode, Brindamma is perhaps one of the finest musicians India has produced. On August 25, 2012, SRUTI, the India Music & Dance Society, celebrated the centenary birth-year of this doyen of Carnatic music vocalist with a thematic presentation titled 'Tribute to Sangita Kalanidhi T. Brinda' at the Science Auditorium of the Montgomery County Community College in Bluebell, PA.

As with all SRUTI community programs, the festive buzz of the event was dominated by the presence of numerous women and children in colorful sarees and other stylish Indian outfits and men in their usual kurtas and western clothes and, with an anticipatory aura of what was to follow. SRUTI Board members were at their stations diligently carrying out all the associated tasks needed to present a flawless program, and the bustling youth who were either participating in the singing or those who had been coerced into coming to the program either by their enthusiastic parents or by their gurus, were getting into gear. It was a packed day with three separate events, punctuated with snacks, lunch, coffee and the like. It is the family and community style atmosphere that one grows to expect and become attached to during such daylong events hosted by SRUTI!

The program began around 10:00 AM in the morning, with a group singing by 9 young students of Kiranavali Vidyasankar, a well-known Carnatic music vocalist and, one of the last students of Brindamma. Kiranavali, who is well-versed with her style, selected specific songs for the performance that were among those that were signature presentations of Brindamma. All the students were girls ranging in age from 9 to 18 years, and were dressed in colorful lehanga daavanis and waited with enthusiasm for the program to begin.

Suguna Chaganti and Chetana Suresh, students of Kiranavali, introduced the musical pieces. The opening song was a sprightly composition of Sri Thyagaraja, Dayajuchutaku, in raaga GAnavAridhi in adi taala. This was followed by a Dikshitar composition, Saraswathi ManOhari in raaga Saraswathi ManOhari, which bears a strong resemblance to raaga KANada, also in adi taala and contained a liberal usage of kaakali nishadam apart from kaishika nishadam. Like VIna Pustakadharinim, it is perhaps yet another of those rare compositions found exclusively in the Dhannamal repertoire.

The composition, ParipUrnakAma, a composition of Thyagaraja in raaga Poorvikalyaani set to rupaka taala followed next. In contrast to the brisk and catchy rendition of GN Balasubramaniam, the group rendered this piece with an emotional and aesthetic touch and with complete peace and serenity that is characteristic of the Brindamma style. The next piece was Dikshitar's 'ThyAgaraja yOga vaibhavam' in raaga Anandabhairavi in tishra jaati eka taala. The composition is well known for its exquisite yati pattern of lyrics in the reductive (*Gopuchcha* in the pallavi) and progressive (*Shrotovaha* in the charnam) style. The main piece of this program was a composition of Maharaja Kumara Yatindra, 'Gajavadana' in raaga Todi set to Adi taala. The chittaswaras in this piece displayed the variety of gandhara notes associated with raaga TOdi demonstrating the composers unique imagination. The group then went on to sing a jaavali of Dharamapuri Subbayyar in raaga KalyAni set to Adi taala, followed by the beautiful padam of Kshetrappa 'OsOsi naa madi' in raaga MukhAri in mishra chApu. Interestingly like many other padams of Kshetrappa this song also started with the anupallavi OsOsi naa madi. This segment ended with two brisk and bright compositions, a thillana in raaga PUrnachandrika, Adi taalam and a Tiruppugazh in raaga MadhyamAvati, both of which were popularized by Brindamma as a performer and a teacher. Both Prakash Rao and Rajna Swaminthan provided excellent support on the mridganam and kanjira respectively.



Participants (left to right) Prakash Rao (mridangam), Srinidhi Ramesh, Mallika Dinakar, Sriranjani Srinivasan, Veena Kanumalla, Rumya Venkateswaran, Sharanya Pillai, Shilpa Sridhar, Priyanka Dinakar, Akshaya Raman, Rajna Swaminthan (Kanjira).

It is very commendable that Kiranavali undertook this challenge of training such young students with such elaborate compositions and, it is equally commendable that these youngsters took on the challenge and trained diligently in learning and memorizing these difficult songs and rendered them with disciplined enthusiasm and in perfect unison. Having imbibed the music so well at this young age, with continued increase in music appreciation and, being aware of the Brindamma baani (style), there is little doubt that these youngsters will represent the baani with more maturity and bhaavam as they advance in their musical training and journey.

Unfortunately, one distraction relating to audio did not go unnoticed. Unexpected screeches, humming and whining sounds emanating from the sound system were a nuisance disturbing an otherwise tranquil experience.

Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar followed this program with a lecture demonstration on Thanjavur Brindamma's lifetime in music. Having been a disciple of Brindamma herself, Kiranavali articulated her personal experiences with the musical genius and gave us a vivid and personal account of the life of Brindamma, interspersed with examples of her music.



Kiranavali came well prepared for this session with slides and excerpts of old and rare music clippings that may not have been in public domain. Her calm demeanor in delivering her lecture together with her ability to help the audience appreciate the subtle nuances of Brindamma's music through the musical recordings helped us glean valuable insights into the works of this remarkable musician and perhaps even learn to appreciate her music.

Kiranavali discussed how Brindamma imbibed the varied hues of musical traditions present in the Vina Dhanammal repertoire, namely traditions handed down from various artists, composers and musicians such as the direct disciple of Dikshitar (Sattanam Panchanada Iyer), Thiruvottriur Thyagaraja, Balakrishna Das (expert on padams) and Dharmapuri Subbayyar (expert of jaavalis). In an unusually bold move that was well ahead of those times, Brindamma and her sister Muktha, were sent to Sri Naina Pillai for gurukulavasa style musical training for a period of three years.

Brindamma absorbed both the sublime and intricate Dhanammal style and Naina Pillai's fast paced masculine music and blended them seamlessly into her singing. Although she is most well known for her renderings of padams, she was equally qualified in singing krithis, and varnams in her inimitable style that rocks your body to and fro, back and forth. Overall, the audience found the lec-dem session highly informative and interactive and left the audience grateful for having such a rich and knowledgeable source within our own community in Kiranavali Vidyasankar!

After a sumptuous lunch, Balraj Balasubrahmaniyan (disciple of Brindamma) presented a vocal concert, in the Brindamma baani. L. Ramakrishnan accompanied him on violin and Rajna Swaminathan on mridangam.

The concert had the traditional structure starting with a varnam, followed by a mix of short and more elaborate



renderings with alapanas and/or swara kalpanas. Then came the main piece of the concert, Thyagaraja's kriti "Emi nEramu" in raaga SankarAbharaNam , along with tAni Avartanam by Rajna Swaminathan. This was followed by 2 padams and, concluded with a mangaLam, invoking wellbeing to all.

In more detail, the concert consisted of the following compositions: the well known varnam "inta calamu" in raaga bEgaDa; Dikshitar's composition "vINa pustaka dhArini" in the uncommon raaga vEgavAhini; the kriti "amba paradEvatE" by Krishnaswamy Ayya in raaga rudrapriya; the kriti "talacinavera" by subbarAya SAstri in raaga dhanyAsi; a brisk rendering of the Thyagaraja kriti "muddu mOmU" in raaga suryakantam; Golapakrishna Bharati's kriti "catre vilaki irum" in raaga pUrvikaLyANi with a reasonably elaborate AlApana; Dikshitar's kriti varadAyaki in raaga brihannAyaki; the Thyagaraja kriti "kripajUcutaku vElarA" in raaga chAyAtarangini; the main concert piece, Thyagaraja's kriti "Emi nEramu" in raaga SankarAbharaNam with tAni Avartanam; a well known padam of kshEtrayya , kuvalayAkshirO in raaga gowLi pantu; a tAmil padam by Subbaramayar in raaga sourAsTram; a jaavali in raaga nATakurunji; and the popular mangaLam "pavamAna sutuDdu".

Just to share a few impressions on some of the renderings, the dhanyAsi and pUrvikaLyANi AlApanas were very soulful and enjoyable. The SankarAbharaNam raaga and its tranquil appeal; its projection and reflection in the kriti by the masterful hands of the great Thyagaraja; and its expression and rendering by Subramaniam and his team made for a delightful experience. Finally, it is always a treat to listen to the great padams of Kshetrayya, such as the kuvalayAkshirO sung by Balasubrahmaniyan. One could close one's eyes and be lost in the flow of the music,

meaning and emotion, which always appears to be like the slow flow of a deep river, with heavy momentum of an almost invisible movement.

L.Ramakrishnan exhibited his mastery and skill on violin providing an engaging support to the main artist. His pleasant personality along with the sweet music from his violin added a delightful dimension to the concert. Rajna Swaminathan, a familiar name to the Sruti audience, also provided excellent percussion support for the concert. Her sincerity, determination and passion for the mridangam was evident in her sparkling tani Avartanam and throughout the concert.

In summary, the concert was a treat to the ears, with Balu's voice being energetic and strong and comfortably spanning the required range of the swaras. His diction was clear and crisp, for all kritis, whether they were in Telugu, Tamil or Sanskrit. His musical knowledge was blended well with the aesthetic import of the kritis, with the result that the listener's heart and mind were both satisfied. Ramakrishnan and Rajna gave excellent support, producing a nice multi-dimensional experience.

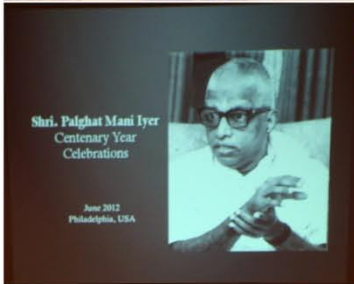
Overall, for those with no prior exposure to Brindamma's works and music style, this event provided a great forum to be exposed and gain some familiarity. For those in the audience who grew up listening to her music, the SRUTI program was perhaps a revision exercise at the very least. As always, the SRUTI board members put in a lot of effort and thought into this community event and made every effort to engage the local youth and resources to make this presentation.

Acknowledgement: We thank Dr M.M. Subramaniam for his many valuable comments and feedback.

Uma and Prabhakar are long time supporters of SRUTI and have served the organization in various capacities since its inception. Both of them have deep interest in classical music and literature. By profession, Prabhakar is a communications engineer and Uma, a scientist.



Images from the 2012 Spring Concert Season



Images from the 2012 Fall Concert Season



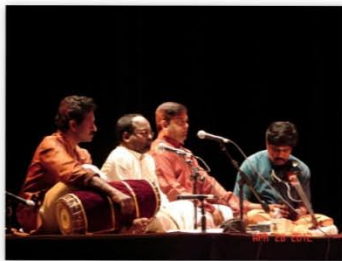
Images from the 2012 Outreach Sessions



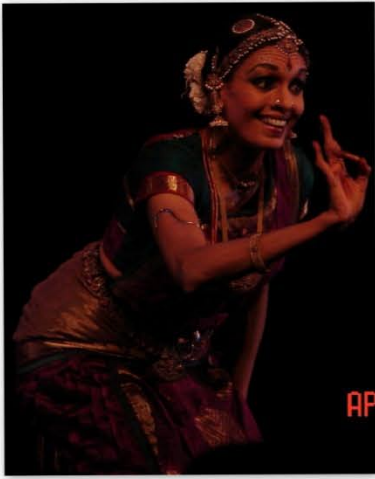
Images from 2012



Images from 2012



Images from 2012



Dr.Vinjamuri Anasuya Devi-Emotions of life through folk songs

Review by Vidya Jayaraman

As someone whose mother tongue is Tamil, I am a relatively new entrant to the world of Telugu sahitya – both classical and folk. Owing to this, my familiarity with Dr.Vinjamuri Anasuya Devi was only in the recent year or two, mostly through friends and from recordings uploaded at surasa.net. For others like me who may not have heard about her, here is a partial list of her achievements:

The first woman music composer in Andhra Pradesh; the first woman music director in South India ; The first woman composer in All India Radio; First to sing classical, folk and light music on radio and the concert platform The first to publish folk music in notation; She has sung during congress sessions meeting luminaries such as Rajendra Prasad, Subhash Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi , and has had the honor of singing a prayer song before Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and has a treasured autograph of his.



When Sruti organized a workshop and a lecture demonstration by the veteran at the Delaware Mahalakshmi Temple, I felt that it was a great opportunity to finally get to see and hear a veteran.

The event started with a workshop where Dr. Anasuya Devi taught three songs. The first, “taalelo illelo”, a song of the Goddess. This was followed by the song of the gypsies or the narikkoravas –“nakkalona cinnadaani”. As she played along on her harmonium, it was heartening to see an enthusiastic group of young people learning these songs. This was particularly fascinating considering many of them are far removed from the cultural context of these songs. Most of these songs are defined by the context in which they are sung - spinning wheel songs, harvest songs, lullabies, palanquin songs, wedding songs, songs at the local temple festivals etc. They are also characterized by eroticism, satire, simple but poignant moments of happiness and joy.

Dr.Anasuya Devi made sure that the songs were sung and transmitted with the right feeling, intonation and approach. Another characteristic feature of folk music is that the lyrics are what one may call “spoken word”. In such songs to retain their flavor of authenticity, words have to be pronounced and inflected in ways rooted to their place and time of origin. While teaching she made sure to mention the context, background and the quality that is unique to the song and also pointed out the right inflection of certain words.

The workshop was followed by her lecdem. She mentioned that these songs were known as “comic songs” and it was she who introduced the term jAnapada geyAlu and ensured that these songs filled with richness of meaning, metaphor and melody should find a rightful place in Indian music. She also mentioned that she made it a point to perform these songs in sabhas as a way of penetrating the ivory towers of classicism. The anecdotal information about how the responses of some of the contributors to her mother’s magazine to her singing a certain padam / javali encouraged her early on was a snippet in musical and social history.



She was ably supported by Srivalli Pillutla and her sisters Lakshmi Putcha and Anuradha Chivukula. Her daughter Kamala Srikar also joined them for a few songs. The sisters began with a prayer Jaya Jaya Priya Bharata. There was a refreshing quality to Dr.Anasuya Devi’s music – it did not have the quality of a person from an urban space singing a folk song but had the quality of an insider - someone who has keenly observed the genre and hence intimately aware of the cultural contexts and the local lingo. The sisters did ample justice to these songs in spite of the short time frame in which they learnt all the songs. One of the songs they sang was “No Mina mallala sandamama” which was a song of the women folk returning after a hard day’s work in the rice fields addressing

the moon. The moon becomes a silent listener of their tales of joy and sorrow, of the day at work, their daily wages, and their children. For instance, one would not want to hear the word pronounced as “chandamama” as in a written form in folk music. Such minor details as inflections, pronunciations largely shape the listening experience of jAnapada geyalu or folk songs in Telugu.

Dr. Anasuya Devi also sang a lovely Telugu Padyam composed by Devulapalli Krishna Sastri on the Pallaki or the Palanquin. The Padyam was followed by a song about a bride being carried in the palanquin to her in-laws house, “Tarli Velle pelli kumaaruni pallakiya” with the characteristic “oho ohohoho” (a term one ethnomusicologist, Theodore Levin terms, “musical onomatopoeia”), imitating the swaying of a palanquin. Karthik Pillutla joined them and sang “BanDira poga BanDira”. This was a song about the train - once a feature of great novelty in the rural landscape, with smoke coming out of its smoke stack.

One could discern the fact that she was a trained folk singer and the many subtle sangatis and embellishments she has added to the basic tunes that she had picked up over her years and has passionately collected them, enhanced them and passed them along. Her tuning of a song based in Tarangini raga was ample proof of her training. She also illustrated how folk songs are characterized by interesting take off points and rhythms and the sisters illustrated it with the song “entaDi VaaDoi chinni KrishnuDu”. There were tales of emotions of love and longing - such as “GodarOri chinnadi”. She also sang Appanna Tanamana – a song which was taught to the Carnatic violinist Dwaram Mangatayaru by her and made it to the Carnatic world and was featured as part of a CD by the flautist Mali.

During the presidential years of Rajendra Prasad, a group of singers had toured New Delhi singing songs in various languages of India. This also brought to light the polyglottic aspect of folk music. Anasuya Devi garu sang snippets of songs in the different languages of the Indian subcontinent - Punjabi, Bengali, Sinhala, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya etc.

For someone who went in with no prior knowledge or awareness of Telugu folk songs, it was a rare moment to actually hear in the form of oral history what many of us have only read about the world surrounding pre and post independence India and the milieu of those times.

It was a master class in music, anthropology, folk history and ethnomusicology all rolled into one.

Vidya Jayaraman is an IT consultant and lives in West Chester, PA. She maintains the website www.guruguha.org. Her other interests include Classical Tamil Literature, Music history and Musicology.

Dr. Indira Peterson -Songs of the fortune-telling Kuṛavañci *Vidya Jayaraman*

As part of Sruti’s Fall Outreach Programs, Prof. Indira Peterson gave a lecture on the “Songs of the fortune-telling Kuṛavañci: Folk themes and music in an operatic drama of 18th century South Indian Courts”. Indira Peterson, through her multi-faceted scholarship and broad array of interests ranging from Sanskrit Epics, Tamil Literature, Religion to Gender and Social Spaces brought to life the melting pot of the 17th-18th century court culture of Tanjavur.

The Kuṛavanci is one of several dramatic genres in vogue between the 17th and the 19th centuries. These were set to music and choreographed and were also performed at the courts and the temples. She began with the factors that created the Kuṛavañci genre. The patrons of this genre included the nayakas - the vassals of the Vijayanagara kingdom, the Palaiyakarars with their small kingdoms in Tirunelveli and Ramnad districts in Southern Tamilnadu. The Nayaka’s successors the Maratha Kings of Tanjavur brought in their own layer of Maratha culture into the mix. These counter currents were further shaped by a music and dance-soaked Tamil speaking Chola heartland of Tanjavur.



The confluence of Yakshaganas, the movement of erukala and other nomadic tribes, the presence of these themes in the local area and the presence of royal patronage fostered this genre. There was also a need for the royals of Tanjavur to engage and negotiate within and without a variety of classes and social spaces and this served as a medium for such interactions. She also touched upon changing

perceptions of ‘folk’ and classical through the times. According to Prof. Peterson, the concept of an upper and lower ‘class’ was somewhat seamless as seen in the poetry of the Cankam age and the Cilappatikāram. These merely feature

the people from the hills as a group without marking their hierarchy in social strata. By the medieval era, these differences became more marked and class-consciousness emerged in the 17th and 18th century accounting for some of the polarization even between folk and classical genres that we see today.

After locating the cultural and geographical context of the Kuṛavañci drama, she spoke about the format and content of a Kuṛavañci. It features the peripatetic Kuṛavañci - the fortuneteller (Kuṛa-vañci - lit. the damsel of the Kuṛa folk), her birdcatcher husband (kuḷuvan), the upper class heroine and her Lord. The most famous work in this genre - the Kutralakkuṛavañci of Tirikuṭa Rācappa Kavirāyar and sang a snippet of “*vānaraṅkal kani koṭuttu mantiyōṭu koñcum*”. This song brings the monkeys frolicking among the fruit trees in Kutralam, a familiar verse memorized by middle school Tamil students in India. She pointed out how some of the verses include ragas like Todi and Kambodhi even in the Kuṛatti’s song and mentioned the dynamism of the terms folk and classical, in marked contrast to how these terms are understood today. She made mention of some of the musical forms in the drama - the daru and the cintu and verses set in the akaval meter.

She recounted how the main theme of the Kuṛavañci starts off with the elite heroine love struck after watching a procession (ulā or pavani) of the Lord / King and her subsequent pining for him. The soothsaying Kuṛatti arrives on the scene with her basket and tells her fortune predicting union with her Lord. The heroine and other women of the town ask the Kuṛatti to tell them details about her and her adventures and where she comes from. She speaks their own tongue glibly, predicting their good fortunes and is rewarded handsomely. The kuravan (also known as the Ciṅkan) who is a bird catcher comes in search of the Kuṛatti singing that he has lost her and finally reunites with her in the main street of the town.

The central theme and the content would be familiar to those who have read the venerable Mahamahopadhyaya Dr.U.Ve.Cāminata Iyer’s introduction to the Kumpecar Kuṛavañci. She also read out some lines from her elegant translations that retained the same cadence and rhythm of the famous lines of Vasantavalli’s “pantu āṭal” (dance with balls) “*ceṅkaiyil vaṇtu kalinkalinenṟu ceyañceyam eṇṟāṭa - iṭaicankata menṟu cilampu pulampoṭu taṇṭai kalantāṭa...*”

It was at this point one could say that Prof.Indira Peterson brought in her additional insights from a social history, gender and anthropological viewpoint. She pointed out that the Kuṛatti character being of a lower class nomadic tribe member acts as an informed agent to the elite but restricted upper class woman, illustrative of the negotiations within a gender but across class lines. She also mentioned how the interplay of genders occurs within strata of society in the conversation between the Ciṅkan and Ciṅki when a jealous Ciṅkan questions her about the new ornaments in her possession. She explains them as the treasures she acquired by way of fortune telling. Ciṅkan is then overcome by lust and entreats her to make love. In the process he loses the birds he caught and Ciṅki chides him. The characters of Ciṅkan and Ciṅki are contrasted with each other with the Ciṅkan as an impulsive naive personality and the Ciṅki as the well-travelled, wise woman. Her excellent compilation of the pictures of the kuravar tribe, images from Tanjavur of the performances of the Kuṛavañci-s, and the images from sculptures collected as part of her fieldwork provided an added visual dimension in bringing to life many concepts we have only known from texts. One could visualize the descriptions of the Kuṛatti as one who wears beads and crab’s-eye seeds (kunṟimaṇi) and carrying a basket.

She enlisted S.Sowmya’s help demonstrate how the music of the Kuṛatti’s song in YadukulaKambhoji was set to a more folkish version of the raga and in tishra nadai and Vacantavalli’s pieces had more of a royal cadence and long-drawn out phrases. The cultural history of Tanjavur being one of her key areas of specialization, she mentioned the Tiyaṅekar Kuṛavañci of Sahaji, the Sarabhendra Bhupala Kuṛavañci and the Devendra Kuṛavañci of Serfojee. The 17th and 18th century also saw the presence of Christian missionaries in Tanjavur including Fr.Swartz, whose protégé included the king Serfojee. This explains the presence of Vedanayakam Sastriyar’s Bethlehem Kuṛavañci. Bethlehem Kuṛavañci of Vedanayakam Sastriyar set to a Christian theme substituted planets for the balls and brought the ideas of Copernican Astronomy with the Kuṛatti using the biblical hill of Eden as the geographic marker of her country. She also mentioned how the Madras Women’s Christian college first performed the Bethlehem Kuṛavañci. She also covered the Devendra Kuṛavañci that was used by Serfojee as a means of teaching geography and how it mentioned Pennsylvania and the world geography.

She finally concluded her lecture with parallels in European operas and in particular the character of Papageno and Papagena in Mozart’s Magic Flute. She explained how the characters Papageno and Papagena being similar to the Ciṅkan and Ciṅki and played a snippet from a performance.

While we understand the scarcity of time and the exhaustive nature of the material, I wished she could have covered some more musical dimensions of the Kuravañcis. I personally would have loved to hear some more about Papavinasa Mutaliar's Kumpecar Kuravañci, given that this was perhaps one of the few Kuravañcis written by a Carnatic Music composer (in addition to Sahaji).

It was an enjoyable lecture delivered with erudition, expertise and precision and the audience were taken through a ride on a time capsule to the times of the Marathas.

Rama Vaidyanathan at the Zellerbach Theatre

Review by Ardhnarishwar

Rama Vadiyanathan presented a program filled with Sringara Bhava which was replete with symbolism and spirituality. She creatively straddled the classical repertoire while trying to interpret the pieces intelligently for a mixture of western and Indian audience that evening.



The evening started with what I would say was a contemporary interpretation of the Allaripu enveloped in a spiritual flavor. The various geometry of framework of the adavus was used artistically to depict the architecture of our temples in the piece Sannidhanam. When she reached the Sanctum she invoked the sacred Mother through the Beeja Mantra. The divine rhythm of the music, the riding of the lion around the stage, the minimalism of the jewelry adorned, the red and black contrasted costume weaved in the multi-faceted Feminine nature of creation, nurture and destruction.

The main central piece of the evening, the Varnam was the classical Bhairavi composition of the Tanjore Quartet – “Mohamana en Meedil”. Rama various directional movements across the stage while interpreting the crisp jathis was purely pleasurable to watch. Kameswaran Sivakumar jathis were crisp, they were just long enough to give a break to the lyrics but not long enough that one forgot the mood of the originating line. Each of the jathis sollukattus were different and added a flavor to the varnam.

The various lines of the pallavi and anu pallavi were broken to help in the interpretation. The sancharis were descriptive – the procession of the Lord in

Tiruvarur with its crowds, jostling, and the awe of watching the lord was done with aplomb. Depicting the sanctum sanctorum of the temple as the chest of Vishnu and Shiva dancing to his heart beat was a nice touch. Arun Kumar fingers whispered at this stage to create the ambiance of this depiction. The Charanam Sahityam of Maran Kanai with the interspersing of the jathis showed versatility in the depiction - multiple ways one endures heart ache due to the pangs of love. The three charna swaras was very intelligently separated by stillness instead of regular music. It showed the grasp of the tala pattern and the comfort level and confidence between the dancer and the musicians.

I wondered why the last charna swara was not included. She never gave me a reason when I asked her after the show. From my limited understanding of this varnam, the lyrics are risqué. At the end of the varnam, I was stuck by her creativity in choreographing it taking into consideration to represent the respectful depiction of spiritual and physical union with the Lord. I did not realize how quickly 30+ minutes pass. My heart and mind were enriched from this experience.

Rama's Guru Yamini Krishnamurthy said - 'The past has been exciting, the present extremely challenging. As for the future, it holds a lot of promise and many surprises. And I cannot wait to unravel them!' That is exactly how I felt when I was waiting for the second half to unfold.

While Rama went away to have a quick change of costume, Vikram Raghukumar played melodiously on his violin. I was enamored by the raga thinking that this sounds very familiar. I was told later that it was Kadanakuthukalam.

Rama started her second half with a Tanjore Quartet Javali “Dani Bodana”. The Nayika asks the Lord why he is ignoring her, when she has come to him with so much of expectations. The song starts with a plea to the lord which over a period of time changes into sarcasm while questioning the lord of his treatment of her and ends with a threat to him to change his ways. We were left smiling at the end of this item.

Rama in the next piece a Padam went on to depict the various feelings one contemplates in various stages in life. The heroine starts off with longing tinged with passion which over a period of deep contemplation moves to devotion. Bhayili Piya the Swati Tirunal composition somehow left me feeling down. Was it the raga or the words I was not sure.

Rama helped me shake out of my mood with her next number. Her depiction of Yashoda enjoying motherhood in ‘Enna thavam seidanai Yashoda’ a composition of Papanasam Sivan was real and natural. Her portrayal of mother interactions with her child in this case Krishna had a level of love and warmth in it which was very much appreciated by everyone. Asha Ramesh the vocalist enriched the experience of this song with bhava which was rich and expansive.

The last item was a Thillana followed by an Abhang. The various movements across the stage during the Thillana left me disoriented. I missed the traditional format of the Thilana with its various attamis and adavus. One would expect a dancer to be tired at this stage of the program. Rama disproved us with her spirited performance of Sant Jana Bai waking up Panduranga in the Abhang ‘Utho Vithala’. Her bhakthi fervor supplemented with lavani movements proved to me what Bhakthi and Bhajans can do to one’s spirit. I could understand why Vithala had no choice but to wake up as I was fully awake and pumped up at the end of the show.

During the post-show chat with the artist, Rama, the well-travelled ambassador of this art form was very articulate on the hard work, determination, dedication and sacrifice it takes to perform at this high level. The spirituality one tries to achieve while immersed in dancing seemed to be the goal of this dancer and this was demonstrated vividly in her selection of songs as well as her interpretation of them in this program.

The accompanying musicians supported the whole evening beautifully. They were non-obtrusive but constructive a difficult task to say the least. Rama with her clarity in describing the items and interpretation did an effortless job in conveying emotion in its various forms in this program. Sringara the rasa was treated with imagination, respect and depth and given the importance it so richly deserves.



Mindfulness of the Meandering Flute

Review by Cody Lake

For this ethnography paper[for an Honors Music class], I reviewed a performance from world-renowned South Indian bamboo flutist and vocalist, Shashank. Three other performers accompanied him: Anwar Khan Manganiyar (folk vocalist), Firoze Khan Manganiyar (Dholak player), and Patri Satish Kumar (Mridungam/Kanjira player).

This performance took place on the 26th of September on Temple University’s campus. As learned through both his website and his lecture, one sees that Shashank follows the South Indian style of playing. Venturing out of this Southern tradition, two of the other performers come from the North, allowing for a demonstration of both varieties. Although they differ in structure, the music’s flexibility allows the two to blend like dialects of the language that is Indian music. Throughout his lecture, Shashank detailed certain key aspects of all Indian music, as well as highlighting discrepancies between the Northern and Southern styles. While the exotic details incorporated into the music may

disturb and distract most foreign ears, an observant, open-minded listener would begin to experience its innermost qualities. Rather than providing an art-form for superficial enjoyment, Indian music inherently expresses its society's deeply-rooted meditative culture. Provoked by the structure of the music, a mindfulness awakens in the listener, as well as in the physical environment of the performance, and, in orchestrating this inner awakening, the Indian music prompts an individual to attentively mind his own actions, nourishing his personal development and the society as a whole.



On the left of the stage, the Northern folk performers sat, one holding a *dholak* and the other with his voice. To their right sat the Southern classical performers, one on the flute and the other on the *mridangam*. Before beginning to play, the Southern drummer pressed a button, and the attendee heard the reflective strumming of the *tambura* sound.

The most basic building block for their music, the *tambura* constantly plays this drone throughout the background of a piece. In order to keep the other performers on check, the drone persists in holding the pitch to which all the other instruments should attune. Once the drone hummed for a few beats, the musicians cooperated to explore outside of it, expanding upon some skeletal melody that they all use as a base,

creating a heterophonic texture in which all the performers play variations of the same. In their training, these musicians learned a set of melodies based on *ragas*, the Indian term most closely related to the Western scale. Each of these *ragas* subdivides into various *thats*, a parent melody consisting of approximately seven notes. In the North, each *raga* stands to represent a certain occasion. For example, *ragas* could express the feelings of the rainy season, of a wedding, and of a funeral. In a similar fashion, the South assigns much meaning to the *ragas* in accordance to the Hindu gods, growing out of the tradition in which Southern music played in temples, rather than in social situations as in the North.

Choosing a familiar Western scale, Shashank demonstrated the complexity of Indian scales with the *kiravani* (minor scale). To start, he played the basic scale for the audience. Then, he explained that, even after learning these basic structures, the aspiring musician would need to memorize the various *arohana*, *avarohana*, and melodic characteristics associated with each melody. When ascending the scale, he plays the *arohana*, and, when descending the scale, he plays the *avarohana*, both of which center around two key notes. Known as *pakar*, melodic ideas such as sliding or zig-zagging between notes allow the performers to execute this revolution. In India, they call this first most important note the *vadi* and the second most important note the *samvadi*. Usually emphasizing these two notes, a performer will often elongate important notes at the beginning of sections in order to clarify them to the listener.

Segueing from the notion of a *raga*, Shashank passes to the Southern drummer so he may exhibit another core area of Indian music, the complex beat cycles. Played on the *tabla* in the North and on the *mridangnam* in the South, these patterns are called *tala*. The *tala* can stretch in length from 3 to 108 beats, which entails much more elaboration than a simple 4-beat or 3-beat cycle common in the West. To demonstrate this, the Southern drummer beat his drum for a few cycles, only playing the basics with no improvisation. Because the percussionists deal with such compound patterns, they memorize syllables which come to represent the various sounds they can play. Again demonstrating this concept, the *mridangnam* player rapidly raced through one cycle. Out of sheer memorization, he quickly recites the syllables that he just played. With that, Shashank has explained the basics of a *tala* and progresses to show the listeners the music's flexibility.

Although it often serves to keep the other performers on track like the *tambura*'s drone, the percussionist may feel free to deviate according to his mood, usually carrying out a conversation with one of the melodic instruments. Beginning with the basic cycle, the drummer prepared. Then, he spiced it up and flowed with what he felt. After noticeably working his way up to an energetic pace, he nodded to Shashank. Taking the queue, Shashank picked up from the drummer's beat and mimicked it with his own mood and taste. They continued to pass off the freestyle for a couple

minutes, and then the energy boiling in their conversation slowly died down. On that, Shashank has expressed the components of a typical performance; however, he has yet to discuss the overarching structure that governs one.

Before the musicians perform the main piece, they introduce the *raga* in an *alap(ana)*. Consisting only of the main melodic instrument and the *tambura*, this *alap* familiarizes listeners to the key aspects of the *raga*, including the *arohana*, *avarohana*, and various important melodic constructions. This section relies on that skeletal melody; however, the performer may semi-improvise to his mood once he plays the main ideas. Throughout the entire *alap*, not a single drum plays, creating a meandering, non-pulsatile feel. As Shashank then pointed out, the Northern and Southern singers tend to vary in their versions of the *alap*. In the South, a singer would sing solely melodic syllables, without any actual lyrics to distract the listener, but, in the Northern folk tradition, a singer would often sing lyrics that compliment the *alap* and the rest of the piece. For example, the North Indian singer on the stage continuously repeated something akin to *boo-kahd* in his *alap*. Once the listener experiences the entirety of the *alap*, the piece moves into its main section, which can also vary in structure based on its Northern or Southern roots.

In the Northern tradition, performers do not subdivide the main piece into various sections; however, in the Southern tradition, the performers organize a *kriti* into three different parts. Starting with the *pallavi*, a player will go through the same base melody multiple times, each time building off the last in complexity and improvisation. Once the end of a section nears, a performer often plays a *mora*, meaning that he will repeat a distinctively different phrase three times to denote a shift. Following after the *pallavi*, the performer would continue then to demonstrate the *anupallavi*, and then the *caranam*.

Despite the differences in structure, both share the common element of improvisation. Unless they wanted to provide a bland performance, the musicians could not simply play the empty-sounding basics of a *raga*. In order to really feel the music, the performers draw upon their mood and the actions of the other players to explore its possibilities. Basing their improvisation on the guidelines of the *raga*, the performers often converse with one another, tossing the spotlight back and forth. For example, Shashank and the singer demonstrated this point when they improvised together. Shashank started one sentence of music, and the singer picked up the sentence to add his own flare. Even if the ear could not pick up his ornaments, one could see from his body motion that he simply felt where the music should go, ornamenting it with all kinds of minute nuances. By taking the rules of the *raga* and playing with them, Indian musical performances embody the meditative culture of their society. When compared to the Western style of music, the meditative undertones jump out to the reader.

In the West, an ordinary man would approach his situation with a rational mindset, setting aside the pros and the cons; however, an ordinary man would also clutter his mind with the boundless trivial conflicts of the day. On top of the cluttered confusion, he often cannot hold his attention on any single issue for too long. If one takes a look at Western music, these qualities present themselves there as well. If a Western ear listened to the “slow, uneventful” tediousness of the *alap*, he would quickly grow bored. Instead, he would rather place his attention on the newest pop song for only three or four minutes, often skipping to the next before the current one has finished. Even when he manages to commit to a certain song, the Westerner may feel as though he were missing out if the music sounds too empty and void of “eventfulness.”

In India, religious and philosophic thought criticize this approach. If one tackled his life in this manner, his understanding of the situation would surely diminish. In order to attain a full understanding, one would have to sit down, meditate, and flesh out his thoughts. On the stage, one sees this concept reflected in the constant drone of the *tambura*. Rather than skipping ahead to a new sound for excitement, the music stays focused on its drone, exploring away from it and yet constantly referring back to it; therefore, one could name the *tambura* the meditative base of the Indian stage.

Just as one's life cannot exist simply without complications, the Indian stage must come alive with more intricacy. The skeletal *ragas* present the musicians with a situation that they must adapt to, and, in the same way, situations crop up in an individual's life. Rather than giving them a quick glance, the Indian musicians embrace them and explore all of their nooks and crannies. Likewise, one who practices meditation will fully examine his circumstance, looking for the best way to carry out his actions. One sees this all-angles approach in the performance by merely observing some intricacies of the *raga*. In abiding by the *arohana* and *avarohana*, a musician takes the *raga* in both directions. Rather than simply looking close-minded at his situation, he confronts it from all of its viable perspectives. In meditation, the

individual would have to let go of his preconceived notions and frustrations in order to get a true sense of things and effectively tackle his life's issues. Once the performers get into the thick of things, they do not skip around whimsically, as one might bounce back and forth in Western thought. Instead, they hold onto one sentence of music and play it repeatedly, each time exploring its many facets and possibilities through improvisation. Mirrored in the act of meditation, one would not give a single issue his full attention for merely a few minutes, but rather he would continue to rethink his approach over a lengthier period of time, allowing him to see the circumstance's complete framework.

As he delves into this framework, various emotions tend to arise. Sometimes feelings of anger, hate, and upset overtake his analysis, while other emotions such as happiness, nostalgia, and appreciation also flood his thoughts. Just like the meandering quality of a human's emotion, a cornucopia of different moods determine the improvisation of a performance. In the middle of his lecture, Shashank demonstrated this factor. First, he performed a solo and imbued it with a pensive hush as he calmly performed on his flute. Then, he took a drastically different approach and displayed an improvisation oozing with frustration and anger, expressing these emotions in his paradoxically aggressive yet standoffish playing. In showing the audience such a broad spectrum of possibilities, Shashank metaphorically introduces the idea of going with the flow, whether on the stage or on the streets.

Regardless of how extreme the emotions of a performance reach, the audience still experiences its breathtaking quality. Taking the complex rules of the raga, the performers adapt and make the best of their guidelines. In the same manner, one who takes the time to meditate and evaluate his life still ends up with a feeling of contentedness, even when all of the odds seem against him. Rather than attempting to coerce his situation, he cooperates with it, coming to piece with what he has and transforming it into something magnificent.

Cody Lake is a student at Temple University and attended the Sruti outreach program as part of the Honors World Music 001 course taught by Dr. Lindsay Weightman

Resolving the Classical and Folk Traditions

Review by Brian Hoang

Music in India has its origins in religious practices that can be traced back to thousands of years ago (Alves, 2012, p. 246). Repetitive chants of mantra prayers and ornate, thoughtful melodic phrases are reflections of the Hindu rituals that celebrate the gods (Alves, 2012, p. 246-247). Rudolf E. Radocy and J. David Boyle (as cited in Barton, 2003, p. 26) state that "culture clearly affects musical behavior [and that] music may influence the culture [in which it is produced]," an observation that holds true for India in the classical music structure and instrumentation.

For instance, the nonpulsatile *alap* introductions of North India are reminiscent of Hindu priest chants centered on a foundation tone, a core pitch drone; the pauses between the South Indian *pallavi*, *anupallavi*, and *caranam* mirror the breathing patterns of yoga meditation; and the cyclic mantra repetition is found in the percussive cycles of the tabla and mridangam drums (Alves, 2012, p. 246-247). Additionally, the principle melodic *ragas* all have extramusical associations that give context and meaning to them, specifying certain occasion or season or time of day it can be performed (Alves, 2012, 254), supplementing their religious and cultural connotations and significances.



The two classical musical traditions of the Indian subcontinent evolved as a result of the Persian invasions of the "late 12th and early 13th centuries" that shaped North Indian Hindustani; South Indian Carnatic music remained relatively untouched by Islamic influences ("Karnatak music," 2012). While they differ somewhat instrumentally and stylistically (Subramanyam, n.d.), they both utilize the same general elements of the raga melody, tala rhythm, drone

of the tanpura/tambura, and improvisational framework (Alves, 2012, p.247). Because of those structural similarities, the two traditions have mostly evolved simultaneously and in modern times, have grown closer together such that the differences are not as great as they once were when Dutch ethnomusicologist Dr. Arnold Bake (1937) mentioned how “widely divergent” the northern and southern styles were (p.65).

When it comes to the categorization of indigenous “folk music”, Dr. Bake’s study (1937) proposed that “[the] basic unity of art-music all over India [...] is not to be found in folk-music” (p. 65), a statement that may have been true at the time, or may have been a result of the vague distinctions between tribal and nontribal folk music that Dr. Carol M. Babiracki of Syracuse University (1997) is quick to point out (p. 73-74); indigenous tribes have wholly unique characteristics that divide them from other tribal styles, whereas nontribal is regional and “unites castes of different occupations, statuses, customs, and beliefs” (p. 75). Dr. Babiracki’s (1997) observations indicate that “[tribal] and nontribal folk musics differ most in their respective relationships to the great, classical music traditions” (p. 76); tribal, or primitive, traditions seem to ignore Carnatic and Hindustani and are relatively isolated from them.

In contrast, nontribal, regional folk music specialists have come into contact with classical performers through religious institutions where the two cultures have influenced each other (p. 76-77). Given these observations, it can be suggested that folk music of the regional, nontribal variation has evolved along with the Hindustani and Carnatic styles, resulting in a bridging of some of their differences in modern times.

A live lecture performance of classical Carnatic and traditional folk music was held at Temple University main campus in Philadelphia, PA, on September 27, 2012 at 5:30 PM, featuring world-renowned Carnatic flautist Shashank Subramanyam. Maestro Shashank was accompanied by Carnatic mridangam drummer Patri Satish Kumar, as well as folk performers Feroz Khan Manganiyar on the dholak and vocalist Anwar Khan Manganiyar. The lecture demonstrated a blending of the classical and folk music styles, highlighting their similarities and differences. Shashank referred to the two styles as “dialects” of the same language; there are regional variations that branch off from a common, musical ancestor.

The folk tradition is passed down within families, where certain members of the community devote their lives to performing for every occasion and event. The Carnatic tradition is more prevalent in temples and religious institutions, which became the merging point between the two styles as folk and classical musicians from across the subcontinent came into contact with and influenced each other. American musicologist Harold Powers (as cited in Babiracki, 1997, p. 77), notes “several text-related musical features that are shared by classical music and devotional song traditions and [...] by the nontribal folk traditions as well.” Additionally, folk musicians will emulate “classical performance style, often introducing a drone and melodic support.” Based on these observations, it can be proposed that the “[classical] and nontribal folk musics may indeed be regarded as great and little expressions of the same tradition,” echoing Shashank’s analogy of folk and classical as musical dialects (Babiracki, 1997, p. 77). The primary difference appears to be the structure of compositions; Carnatic composition is much more methodical and mathematically defined in terms of melodic progress, timing, structure, and improvisation than folk styles.

To the untrained ear, the combination of two folk performers with two Carnatic musicians would not appear to be extraordinary. To the experienced listener, as Maestro Shashank pointed out, such an arrangement can be a challenge for the ensemble due to subtle variations outside of the general structural differences. For instance, the Carnatic drummer shadows the vocalist and instrumentalists, requiring knowledge of their compositions in order to accompany while simultaneously keeping time for them. Folk drummers lead the performance with the fundamental composition that the vocalists and instruments follow. Combining the two styles presents a challenge that Shashank described as “incorporating everyone’s musical sensitivities of music, while keeping their individual flavors intact.” When all four musicians performed, this goal was achieved by having one of the two styles begin with an introduction that was followed by the second style, and combining the two together. The back-and-forth between flautist Shashank and vocalist Anwar would serve as the bridge between folk and Carnatic, made possible by the reliance on improvisation. This inherent flexibility allowed the performers to switch between the two systems seemingly without trouble. The smoothness of the transitions is also due to the reliance on anticipation, as demonstrated by Shashank sometimes repeating a phrase three times before allowing Anwar to take over. This repetition ends with an “idea” that the next performer then plays off of and incorporates into his own system, adding his own flourishes and ornamentation. There is an ebb-and-flow between the folk and Carnatic systems that takes each other’s characteristics into account and integrates them to maintain a consistent balance while still retaining each one’s unique traits. The transition may also

be aided by the Carnatic emphasis on vocal music, training musicians in vocal traditions they must learn and then transfer to instruments. Thus, it is common to have instrumentalists attempt to “speak” and imitate the voice as shown by drummer Patri Satish Kumar approximating vocal pitches with variations in striking the mridangam heads.

Shashank likened the performance to travel, where the goal is to go from “point A to point B,” with the ability to choose whatever path and whatever speed desired as long as the time taken to reach the destination remains constant. The observations and experiences of Maestro Shashank demonstrated that while folk and Carnatic traditions have distinct differences, they both retain a similar ancestry and common musical sensibility that can resolve their divergent structures into a harmonious collaboration of Indian art and culture.

Brian Hoang is a student at Temple University and attended the outreach session by Shashank and the Manganiyars that was organized by SRUTI.

References

Alves, W. (2013). *Music of the peoples of the world*. Boston, MA: Schirmer, Cengage Learning.

Babiracki, C. M. (1991). Tribal music in the study of great and little traditions of Indian music. In Nettl, Bruno & Bohlman, Philip V. (Eds.), *Comparative musicology and anthropology of music: Essays on the history of ethnomusicology* (69-90). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Barton, Georgina. (2003). *The influence of culture on instrumental music teaching: A participant-observation case study of Karnatic and Queensland instrumental music teachers in context*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Eprints Queensland University of Technology. (15859)

Bake, A. (1937). Indian folk-music. *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 1(63), 65-77.

Karnatak music. (2012). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com.libproxy.temple.edu/EBchecked/topic/96272/Karnatak-music>

Subramanyam, S. (n.d.). An outline of South Indian music. Retrieved from <http://www.shashank.org/>

nandanAr caritram – The Storyline

By Uma Prabhakar

At a recent lec-dem event organized by SRUTI, on November 9th 2012 at Montgomery County Community College, on the folk music’s influences on Carnatic music, Dr. Indira Viswanathan Peterson, David B. Truman Professor of Asian Studies at Mount Holyoke College, Boston, and Dr. S Sowmya, a renowned Carnatic music vocalist, talked and demonstrated the music of KuruvANJI and Gopalakrishna Bharathi’s opera *nandanAr caritram*.



While sitting through an almost two and a half hour session, I saw several heads in the audience nodding in appreciation of what they heard and occasionally sharing their excitement with the ones sitting next to them. But for me, I was completely lost and thoroughly confused with the information presented and also felt annoyed at myself at not being able to follow the lec-dem. Admitting the

difficulty of effective translation of Indian languages into English in general, the excessive Tamil jargon used during the lectures, not being of Tamil descent, not knowing the language and, having only a limited knowledge of ancient Tamil music and folklore also contributed to my lack of understanding of what was being presented. However, the

lec-dem did tweak enough curiosity within me to seek the magical help of the Internet to find out more about *nandanAr caritram*.

From my gleanings of the literature, the story behind this opera/musical is complex, intriguing, and laced with several anecdotes typical of those old times, but with inconsistency between different versions. I am also aware of the fact that there are several Tamil books on the topic that provide comprehensive and detailed information on the opera. While I had initially set out to present an appreciation of the musical, I must admit I was overwhelmed with the enormous information that was available and frankly did not feel I could do justice to the topic in a short article. So for now I have decided to share with the reader my interpretation of the skeletal outline of the musical which I hope, in itself, will inspire one to listen and learn more about this extraordinary work. A detailed appreciation of the opera resplendent with the accompanying musical pieces, their context and interpretations will be forthcoming in a subsequent article.

Gopalakrishna Bharathi (1811-1886), a Tamil composer of Carnatic music, was a junior contemporary of Saint Thyagaraja. He is credited with composing several kritis on the principles of advaita including, two operas in the genre of religious story telling with music, one of which is *nandanAr caritram*. In the olden days, Tamil kritis that could be used by harikatha and shivakatha exponents did not exist, which further enhances the uniqueness of this work. The simple lyrics of *nandanAr* songs are drenched in *bhakti rasam* and set in soulful ragas. The highly regarded Thanjavur Krishna Bhagavata, who developed the art of *kathakAlakshepam* by introducing elements from Marathi performance practice and elements of dance, made the *nandanAr caritram* one of his masterpieces. Many subsequent adaptations included stage plays and three film versions as well. Further, the individual songs of Gopalakrishna Bharati became popular with Carnatic musicians. Eventually, Bharata Natyam dancers, including T. Balasaraswati, took up select pieces for interpretation as *abhinaya*.

Briefly, this opera is a fictitious and poignant story about the power of *nandanAr*'s devotion for Shiva to overcome the intense caste prejudice he faced, to eventually merge with Shiva physically in a blaze of light. Bharati's version of *nandanAr caritram* is a masterly development of the story narrated in Sekkizhar's *periyapurANam*, wherein he included many forms of Tamil regional music, capturing very successfully and powerfully the local dialect and popular expression. The burning desire of *nandanAr* to see Shiva at Chidambaram is also compared to the mood and paralleled the aspirations of Indian nationalists yearning for independence from Britain!



Born in Aadhanoor situated between pennaiyAru and Kolladam, *nandanAr*, also known as *tirunAlaipPOvAr nayanAr*, was a staunch devotee of Shiva from his younger days. A *paraiyAr* (untouchable, *dalit*) by birth, *nandanAr* toiled hard and diligently in the fields as a bonded laborer for the landlords, who were Aadhanoor Brahmins. His greatest desire was to go to a Shiva kshetram and have *darshan* (vision) of Shiva. In those days, the untouchable community was not allowed inside temples and therefore his chances for a *darshan* of the Lord were slim. However, *nandanAr*'s pure devotion and quest to see Shiva was fulfilled in several ways as described in the opera.

In the first instance, *nandanAr* receives a message in his ear saying, "In Tiruppungur (8 kms from Vaideeshwaran kovil (temple) near Sirkazhi Mahakshetram), Theradi nindram (from the chariot) Shiva darshanam is possible". So *nandanAr* beckons and persuades his friends to go with him to Tiruppungur Kshetram to see the Lord. His friends accompany him to the Temple with high hopes and expectations! However, as they approach the temple they are greeted to pure darkness with a huge statue of Nandikeshwarar (Nandi) blocking their view of Shiva! In tears *nandanAr* pleads and complains to Lord Siva that a bull like a mountain is obstructing his view of the Lord. Shiva moved by his devotion looks at Nandikeshwarar, and says, "Thirunalaipovar *nandanAr* has come to see me! Nandikeshwara, please move a bit so he can see me"! Nandi obliges and moves away and this is accompanied by the sounds of the bells and *nandanAr*'s cries with tears of joy.

nandanAr's devotion and desire to see Shiva in Chidambaram continues to grow and he constantly says "*NalaipPOven, NalaiPOven*" (*I will go tomorrow*) which eventually earned him the name "*Thiru NalaipPovar*", while his landlord (*vEdhiar*) constantly refuses to oblige. Interestingly, *nandanAr* is compared to the athma, and the landlord for the mind. The analogy may signify that the mind blocks spiritual progress as long as the self is identified with the mind. When the mind ceases to give orders the self becomes free to pursue the path of salvation.

The landlord feels that it is unbecoming for someone like *nandanAr* to wish to go and see Lord Shiva in Chidambaram. He tells *nandanAr* to go home to his neighborhood and come back the next day to do his work. *nandanAr* pleads with the *vEdhiar* (landlord) to let him go to Chidambaram as the day of *thiruvaadhirai* in *margazi* is fast approaching. But the landlord doesn't yield and rebukes *nandanAr* as having gone crazy. Eventually, the landlord poses an impossible task of sowing and reaping a vast field overnight as a prerequisite to be granted permission to go to Chidambaram!

Lord Siva moved by *nandanAr*'s pure devotion and dedication decides not to test him further and sends Ganapathi to dig a water tank in his neighborhood and his aides (*bhUta gaNas*) to sow and reap the vast land in a single night. When the landlord sees the impossible mission accomplished, he then understands the greatness of *nandanAr* and asks for his forgiveness!

nandanAr finally arrives in Chidambaram, but the *dikshitArs* of the temple do not allow him to enter the temple. Again, the Lord appears in their dreams and commands them to allow him in. The next day, at Lord Shiva's command, three thousand Brahmins of Chidambaram take him and bathe him and as he walks into the sanctum sanctorum, he finally merges into the *gyOti* (the light) and attains *mOksha* (salvation)!

Thanks to Dr. M.M. Subramaniam, Dr. Prabhakar Chitrapu, Usha and Bala Balasubramanian for their helpful comments and feedback.

All about Style and Approach – Sanjay Subrahmanyam Concert Review

Dr.Pitchumani Sivakumar

There are test matches and one dayers and then there is the frenetic thrill-a-minute 20-20 but a true cricket lover experiences something unique in each of these formats. Likewise, you can have a sumptuous multi-course south Indian meal or a wheateous north Indian fare, but a once-in-a-while pizza party has its own charm.

Sanjay's concert for Sruti was one-of-a-kind that offered a little of everything, so to speak. There was the laidback old school mohanam and sankarabharanam, together with a delightful abheri, a sedate subhapanthuvarali and a mellifluous behag. I will not dwell on the laundry list of ragas for I know this would be covered in other reviews, but merely highlight aspects of the concert that I found impactful. Breath control, expansive knowledge and manodharma have always been outstanding components of Sanjay's music and this concert showcased those qualities.



The concert was punctuated by some exquisite sustains and gamakas in alapanas – the sustains were quite remarkable as though emanating from a nadaswaram although Sanjay himself would believe there is no such “bani” per se. Swathi Thirunal's “Maamava Sadha” (Kaanada) was a good loosener that set the tone for the concert. The swara exchanges in sankarabharanam (Akshaya Linga Vibho) were truly a pleasure. The nadai/gathi variations in “GMPMG-MGSRG” combo ending were rendered in a controlled fashion and the anticipation of the accompanists was amazing. Sanjay's skills in RTP and Virutham singing are unparalleled and this concert was no different on that front, although I came out with a feeling that there could have been more variety in ragas for the RTP swaras as well as the virutham.

A unique feature was the start of the virutham in a weighty “Khamboji” – I am saying this because generally artists tend to choose lighter ragas for virutham singing. I was hoping for a Sanjay special “thillana”, but it was not to be. Varadarajan's skills to immaculately follow the main artist have made him a very valuable accompanist, and he matched Sanjay note to note through the entire concert. Neyveli Venkatesh on the Mridangam accompanied in a seamless fashion without any overt gimmicks. The thani in misra chaapu had some very well thought out thisra and misra nadai sollus and korvais.

A remarkable feature of the concert was the unfussy attitude of the artists, which enabled the concert to flow without any interruptions. All given and said, I came out quite satisfied and I presume many others like me would have as well. In the end, it is all about style and approach.

Kudos to Sruti for organizing such a wonderful concert – it was undoubtedly a roaring success!

Dr.Pitchumani Sivakumar is an ardent classical music lover and mridangam teacher in King of Prussia, PA.

An appreciation of folk and classical music from India

Review by Panchanadam Swaminathan

SRUTI, The India Music and Dance society, presented a double header on Nov 9th and 10th 2012. Interestingly this time it was focused on the influence and appeal of folk music among the connoisseurs of classical music (specifically Carnatic music from in the south and Hindustani music in the north).

If one looks at the evolution of music in general and classical music in particular, it evident that it started as simple tunes resembling the folk tunes and over a period of time well codified and structured by musical genius during the past several centuries. Professor Peterson described in detail the role of gypsies (vagabonds) and their contribution to the development of folk music in southern India. There is also reference to folk music prevalent as far back as the last Tamil Sangam period (2000 BC). Indira Peterson pointed out that these gypsies must have originated somewhere in the central India which is currently part of Andhra Pradesh. The quality of the folk music that was rendered by these gypsies is rich in melody and rhythmic pattern. Appealed by its lyrical and melodic beauty, music scholars in later years revived folk music in the form of operas and dance dramas.

Prof. Peterson elaborated the popular Kutrala Kuravanchi, an opera performed in the form of dance ballet rich in folk music from the medieval time. The folk music (in Tamil Nadu) is further subdivided into five different 'tinai's based on the geographical landscape, viz. kurinchi (mountainous), mullai (river valley), marutham (forest), neytal (ocean resort) and palai (desert). The beauty and geography of the landscapes and, its flora and fauna is oven into different tinai's which are associated with the romantic relationship depicted in the music. Prof. Peterson gave some beautiful examples of these during her lecture.

The folk music presented in these operas bear lot of resemblance to the classical ragas performed in a traditional music concert. Prof. Peterson elegantly brought out these similarities during the course o her discussion. Later she requested Sowmya who was in the audience to come up stage and demonstrate the resemblance between the folk tunes and the classical ragas. Sowmya accompanied by M.S Ananthakrishnan (violin), Neyveli Narayanan (mridangam) and K.V. Gopalakrishnan (kanjira) performed popular classical ragas like yadukula khambodhi, harikhambodhi and ananda bhairavi which are also used in folk music. She enlightened the audience with differences in the style of rendering of these ragas and range of scales used in the performance of the classical music and folk music.



On the second day, Sowmya and Bharat Sunder presented a jugal bandhi where they alternated singing classical raga and the equivalent folk tune.

They were accompanied by Ganesh Prasad (violin), M.S. Ananthakrishnan (violin), Neyveli Narayanan (mridangam), Trivandrum Balaji (mridangam) and K.V. Gopalakrishnan (kanjira).

Sowmya started the concert with the rendering of a composition in classical panthuvrali with complex swara kalpanas and embellishments. Bharat Sunder followed this with a crisp rendering of one of Thyagaraja's utsava sampradaya krithi "shobaane..." in panthuvrali, only this time the rendering was devoid of complex rhythmic patterns and embellishments of panthuvrali. Bharat Sunder went on to render one of Thyagaraja's classics "Rama Nannu Brovara..." in harikhambodhi replete with complex kalpana swaras, sangathis and rhythmic pattern. In folk music there are several tunes labeled "kavadi sindu, nondi sindu, themmangu etc" derived from harikhambodhi. To demonstrate this point, Sowmya rendered a composition from the opera "Kutrala Kuranvanchi" in "nondi sindhu".

Later Sowmya also demonstrated the rendering of Bhairavi, which is known for its complex sangathis and embellishments in folk style devoid of all the complexity and still presented with emotional appeal. After rendering an RTP in bhairavi, the artists concluded the concert with a popular composition "pulli kalaba mayil ..." in kavadi sindhu. Brilliant accompaniment by violin and the concluding thani by the percussionists added extra delight to the enjoyment and made the performance a memorable one.

The take home message from the two days of presentation is that folk music and folk tunes have lot in common with the classical music (Carnatic as well as Hindustani) ragas. The darus of folk music are similar in structure to kirthanas or bandish. However, the main difference between folk music and the classical music in general is the simplicity of folk music without complex rhythmic pattern and swara kalpanas and embellishments found in classical music. This adds support to the theory that music must have started out in its simplistic form like the folk music. Because of its simplicity, folk music had large mass appeal. With the passage of time, classical music had evolved into a well-defined structured music thanks to the contribution of the musical legends from the South and the North India.

It is important to note that some of these musical legends are also responsible for reviving the popular folk tunes into musical operas (Nandanar Charithram) and dance ballets (Kutrala Kuravanchi). To be a performing artist of classical music one must undergo several years of training and practice under a guru. In contrast, any body with basic musical skills can render folk tunes without elaborate training and years of practice. Music is music whether it is folk or classical and its appeal to humans is universal. So the question is what is in music, folk or classical? Does it really matter to appreciate music?

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

S. Sowmya at Swarthmore College

Report by Professor Steven P. Hopkins

It was my pleasure, as Professor of South Asian and Comparative Religion at Swarthmore College, to welcome S. Sowmya and her musicians to the campus this fall. The event was organized, through a generous grant by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage through the Philadelphia Music Project, by Sruti: The India Music & Dance Society, and co-sponsored by the Department of Religion, Asian Studies, The Department of Music and Dance, and DESHI, the South Asian Students Organization, Swarthmore College.



Sowmya's afternoon lecture/ performance at Swarthmore explored -- through a mixture of lecture and live performance of musical examples -- the pans or musical modes in early South Indian music. Carnatic song integrates the most sophisticated forms of musical performance -- modes and musical formulae -- svarga, raga, tala, pallavi, alapana -- as developed by learned musicians in multi-lingual and polymath Hindu courts from the 14th- to the 19th-centuries -- with echoes of the elaborate learned doctrines of Sanskrit scriptures

-- the Upaniṣads, the Puranas, the namasiddhanta or the chanting of divine names, and the technical minutiae of the Nada Shastras (treatises on divine sound-power) -- with influences from the simplest of folk melodies and genres, from peasant workers songs of the fields, devotional songs of low-caste wandering beggar-saints, pilgrimage songs, to women's songs of harvest, marriage, lament, and songs celebrating the birth of children (strila patalu in Telugu).

Though Carnatic songs range widely in genre, from the praise of kings to secular romances, much of this repertoire is in the service of a form of religious devotion that seeks to open up the human heart to floods of divine grace and divine beauty, to spontaneous love of god -- objective and subjective genitive -- a refined art of religious emotion.

S. Sowmya's presentation focused specifically on the connections between Carnatic musical forms in Tamil and Telugu and the indigenous music of South India by presenting folk tunes such as the kavadi chindu, talattu, alongside the dignified padams and javalis and the sophisticated and complex ragam, tanam and pallavi. She was ably accompanied on stage by M.S. Ananthakrishnan on the violin, Neyveli Narayanan on mridangam, and K.V. Gopalakrishnan on kanjira, a percussion instrument of the tambourine family that is used as an accompaniment in Carnatic music).

S. Sowmya is an intellectually gifted Carnatic vocalist who brings a strong background in the theory of Indian music to her performance of Carnatic music. She has drawn from the research experiences of her teacher Dr.S.Ramanathan, known for his seminal work on Ancient Tamil and folk Music Traditions, and has presented guided appreciation

sessions on Tamil and folk music to help bridge the gap between research and performing, with the ultimate goal of bringing the richness of these traditional musical forms out to a wide audience. And in this she was wildly successful at Swarthmore.

Steven P. Hopkins is a Professor of South Asian and Comparative Religion at Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

Shashank and The Manganiyars at the University of Pennsylvania

Report by Kati Holland

More of an interactive workshop than a strict musical performance, internationally renowned Carnatic flautist Shashank Subramanyam and the Manganiyar folk musicians of Rajasthan shared a cultural delicacy – a melting pot of music, tradition, and decades of experience – with students and faculty at the University of Pennsylvania.

The set was simple – two barefoot musicians sat cross-legged on a wooden table, and the other two sat upright in folding chairs. The intimate performance reflected India's diverse musical heritage, emphasizing the coexistence of supposed opposites: classical and folk, new and old, flexibility and precision. To the left, classical musicians Shashank (flute) and Patri Satish Kumar (mridangam) wore white kurtis and jeans, whereas their counterparts, folk musicians Anwar Khan Manganiyar (vocals) and Firoze Khan Manganiyar (dholak), dressed in colorful silk garments. Shashank sported a modern silver watch; Anwar Khan embraced traditional gold jewelry. This juxtaposition between traditional classical and modern folk carried over into the performance, which began with two interpretations of the same melody: Carnatic raga *Sankarabharanam* and the equivalent Hindusthani raga *Sudh Bilawal*.

Shashank, a child prodigy who began performing at the tender age of six, mesmerized audience members with his ability to improvise. "Classical improvisation is methodical – scientific," he explained. "But I also get to play. I'm supposed to be creative, while maintaining the identity of the music."

Anwar Khan Manganiyar, too, wowed audience members with his creative control. However, unlike Shashank's classical background, Anwar Khan's folk upbringing lent to greater flexibility, allowing him to bend pitch with text and shift between volumes that mirrored the dynamic stories he shared. The exchange between flute and voice – classical and folk – exposed the vast differences between the two distinct genres while also highlighting their many



similarities: Both genres valued tradition, cherished the intricacy of the human voice, and sought to paint emotion with song. The musicians were artists, craftsmen, and teachers, inviting audience members to join them on the exciting journey through the diverse sounds of India.

In response to a student who asked, "What happens if you get off track?" Shashank, breaking his serious performance demeanor, shifted in his seat, smiled, then replied, "It's music. There's never a time when you're going to die."

Kati Holland is a student at the University of Pennsylvania and wrote this paper for the course titled "Performing Arts in South Asia" taught by Dr. Allyn Miner.

Shashank and The Manganiyars at the University of Pennsylvania

Report by Naimah Hares

The atmosphere of the room had completely changed on the day of the workshop, with students and outside members seated, the sound of the tanpura resonating throughout the room, and the irrefutable presence of Shashank with the Rajasthani performers increasing my curiosity. There before me stood four musicians, sitting comfortably in traditional garb, ready to spill the contents of their hybrid of classical Carnatic and traditional Manganiar folk music. What I experienced was unexpected, methodical, and mesmerizing as Shashank played beautiful combinations of complex notes on his bamboo flute, the percussionists executed different various beats on the dholak and mridangam, and Anwar Khan Manganiyar displayed passion through his powerful and unique vocal range.

I enjoyed the music, not just because of the authenticity of the pieces that were played, but also the interaction between the performers, their ability to play the same composition differently but still following the restrictions of the Indian music system, and the story-telling nature of their demonstrations. Anwar Khan and Shashank would go back and forth in eye contact and imitating the same notes in various forms, one passionately singing a stream of notes freely with no restrictions, while the other methodically reflected the notes within a certain beat cycle and note. I was thoroughly impressed by the vocal quality of the flute, the percussionists' versatility in changing beat patterns within a certain cycle, and the dependency of percussion, flute, and for tempo and improvisation. These qualities made the workshop all the more appreciable as I listened to different versions of the same songs in the Carnatic and folk styles.

It was a privilege not just listening to these performers, but also learning about the history and system of their music. There was no demonstration that was not thoroughly explained beforehand by Shashank, from explaining the musical and religious role of the Manganiar family in the Rajasthani society to the seven-beat cycles used to play a set of notes and rhythms in accompanying the vocals. This made the demonstrations all the more inspiring when the group not only played the pieces, but at the same time broke them down to show the simplicity of the system of performance but difficulty in its execution. The more Shashank explained in detail the complex use of every instrument present, the more my respect increased for what these performers were able to do.

Naimah Hares is a student at the University of Pennsylvania and wrote this paper for the course titled "Performing Arts in South Asia" taught by Dr. Allyn Miner.

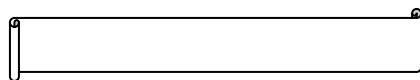


**The following members of the community have written for the various
SRUTI publications in 2012 including Sruti Ranjani**

Thank You

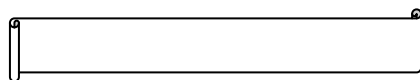
Ardhnarishwar
Gopalan Sridhar
Harish Bevinahally
Kamakshi Mallikarjun
Kiranavali Vidyasankar
Latha Suresh
Micah Walter
Panchanadam Swaminathan
Pitchumani Sivakumar
Prabhakar Chitrapu
Rajee Raman
Rasikan

Savita Narasimhan (Courtesy of Sruti magazine)
Steven Hopkins
Subha Narayanan
Sumanth Swaminathan
Sunanda Gandham
Sundari Balakrishnan
Uma Prabhakar
V.K Balasubrahmanyam
Vidya Jayaraman
Vidyasankar Sundaresan
Viswaram Janakiraman
William Jackson



Aditya Peri
Anshul Ramanathan
Bhaskari Budhavarapu
Brian Hoang
Cody Lake
Kati Holland
Kethan Srinivasan
Kirena Manivannan
Mallika Dinakar

Naimah Hares
Neha Nataraj
Priyanka Dinakar
Sashank Sridhar
Sheetal Tadiparty
Shivram Viswanathan
Shreya Srinivasan
Siddhartha Jagannath
Sindhu Budhavarapu
Veena Kanumalla



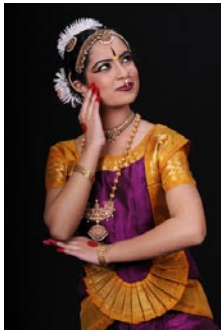
Brilliant showcase of Power and Passion

Neha Nataraj

Twirls. Beautiful lights. Angry expressions. Powerful jumps. Affectionate hugs. Beatific smiles. Rochitha Nathan was a bundle of mixed emotions and supremacy during her Bharatanatyam arangetram on July 21, 2012 at Harriton High School, Rosemont PA. Though of a small stature, Rochitha grew magnified on stage, drawing every eye through her impassioned naatya.

She began her show with a medley of Praveen D. Rao's pushpanjali and Tulasivanam's "Bhajamanasa," where she entreated the god Ganesha to remove any obstacles and to allow her recital to be a success, which indeed it was. This piece, choreographed by Viji Rao, was followed by a very crisp mishra alarippu, also arranged by Viji Rao, which contained unexpected jumps and spins, bringing in a very unique style to the traditional piece. Rochitha upheld a firm yet delicate stance during this dance, brightening the stage with her illuminating smile.

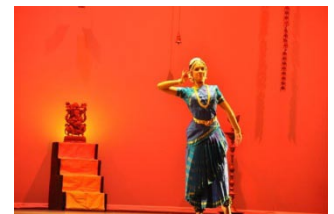
S. V. Balakrishna's jathiswara in Nalinakanthi followed. Rochitha sustained excellent strength and vigor as she performed this piece of pure Nritya orchestrated by Viji Rao. With a countenance of divine tranquility, the young dancer maintained strong hand gestures and vigorous footwork.



Rochitha brought on a show of excellent stamina and endurance as she danced to Sri Tirumalai Srinivas's varna in Reethigowla, the main piece of the evening. Throughout this beautiful piece choreographed by the late Guru Narmada, she displayed mastery over diverse emotions and feelings as she acted out the various stories of Sri Krishna. At the beginning, she displayed the story of Vasudeva, bravely taking the infant Krishna to Gokula so that his son would be well protected. Next, Rochitha was the seemingly ingenuous and innocent infant who cunningly killed the *rakshasi* Poothana. She brought out the forceful power of the demoness with her authoritative expressions and strength in her inner core. Later on, she emerged as the playful young man who teased the gopis of the village with the perfect expression of mischief. Finally, Rochitha became the mature teacher of Arjuna who preached Geethopadesha on the battlefield. She brought out this dramatic scene with extreme competence. I could not help but marvel at

Rochitha's perfect precision for every stride, strength in posture for every leap, elegant mudras during every stretch. The tempo of this elaborate varna was swift, yet as her guru brought out the rapid nattavangam and the orchestra played out intricate rhythms, Rochitha never faltered in her step as she retained her fortitude with a bright smile and strong step. She concluded the show's main piece with triumph, leaving her audience in awe.

Following this piece, the supple Rochitha spun onto stage with an aura of splendor as she danced to Thanjavur Sankara Iyer's beautiful composition in Revati, "Mahadeva Shiva Shambo." This piece was choreographed by Viji Rao specifically for Rochitha's arangetram. The passionate young lady successfully and exquisitely brought out Shiva's powerful personality with her bold movements, unexcelled balance, and strong facial expressions.



I could not take my eyes off the ardent dancer during Bragha Bessell's choreography of the all-time favorite "Theerada Vilayattu Pillai" by Subramanya Bharathiyar. Rochitha brought out genuine feeling and overflowing charm as she enacted the troublesome antics of the burgeoning Krishna. Indeed, she fell in love with this song when she was only the tender age of four.

In an exhilarating finale, Rochitha danced to a thillana in the raga Hindola composed by Praveen D. Rao and choreographed by Viji Rao. She illuminated the stage as she twirled around with invigorated energy and crisp footwork. At the very end, she blew the minds of her supporters in the audience as she held a 30-second pose with perfect balance as the lights slowly dimmed away.

Rochitha concluded the program with a mangala, during which she thanked her audience, her musicians, and her guru. She dedicated this item to her beloved late grandfather. Of course, it must be noted that the accompanying music for the performer is just as important as the dance itself. The vocalist, Ajay Warriar brought the melody to life through his

sweet voice. The intricate beats of percussion were flawlessly played out by Mr. Bhavani Shankar. Mr. Thevarajah Mylvaganam displayed his mastery of the violin as he drew out beautiful gamakas on his instrument while Ms. Bhuvana Kannan chimed in with her magic on the veena. Guru Viji Rao effortlessly recited the fast jathis of the nattavangam intermittently throughout the performance while the orchestra maintained a dynamic balance throughout the show, complimenting Rochitha's energetic dancing.

The revered guru, Viji Rao, was instrumental to Rochitha's development. Her loving guidance helped Rochitha flower into a passionate artist, and Viji's highly imaginative and novel choreography brought out the best in Rochitha on stage, whose vibrant performance was filled with a variety of emotions depicted by the mellifluous, lilting music compositions by several musicians—mainly, Praveen D. Rao. Rochitha has blossomed into a marvelous dancer under the guidance of Guru Viji Rao, and her enchanting debut performance keeps her audience eagerly awaiting many more of her performances in the future.

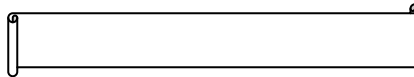


Neha Nataraj is a rising senior at Conestoga High School. Her passions include science, Indian Classical and popular music, and Bharatanaatyam. She has been a member of the Three Aksha Dance Company for the past eight years. Here she writes about her friend Rochitha Nathan's bharatanatyam arangetram

Special Thanks to the sponsors of the SRUTI 2012 concert season

Amrutha Srinivasan
Annapurna & Srinivas R. Chaganti
Babu & Leela Yadati
Balaji Raghothaman
Bhanu Kanumalla
Chitra & Sundararajan Arunapuram
Chitra and Rajan Chandran
Dinakar Subramanian & Raji Venkatesan
Dr. Balu Athreya
Gayathri and Sudhakar Rao
Girish Havildar
Gopalan and Srividhya Ramanathan Sridhar
Jack Todes
Jayanthi Yegneswaran
Jeya Sankaran
Kumar and Bhuvana Srinivasan
Lakshmi D. Venugopal
Lakshmi Radhakrishnan
Lalitha Krishnan
Lata & Suresh Tyagarajan
Malathi & Ramchandra Nayak
Murali and Vijayalakshmi Rajan
Murari Santhanam
Nagesh NJ & Vijaya Vishwanathan
Nalini and Sagar Venkateswaran
Nari & Subha Narayanan
Padmini & T.S. Venkataraman
Panchanadam & Viji Swaminathan
Paul and Vasantha Narayanan
Ponnal & Nambi Aiyer
Praba & Mani Subramaniam
Prabha & Dr.Parameswaran
Prabhakar Chitrapu & Uma Prabhakar
Preetha & Jai Kesari
Priya Venkatesh

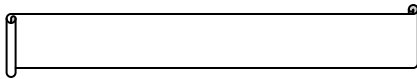
Radha & Venkat Kilambi
Rajee and Venkatraman Visweswaran
Rajeev Nambiar & Family
Ramaa & Rungun Nathan
Ramaa and Ramesh Santhanakrishnan
Ramana & Santi Kanumalla
Rangarajan Suresh
Ranjani Swamy & Narayan Swamy
Ravi & Srivalli Pillutla
Renuka & Ramesh Adiraju
Revathi and Ranga Narayanan
S Venkat Raman
Sarada and Parasaran
Satya and Mallick Budhavarapu
Satya Prasad Kunapuli
Seetha Ayyala & Kishore Pochiraju
Shanti and Raghu Parthasarathy
Sharmila B. Rao
Shashikiran
Sudha & Ravishankar Raman
Suhasini & Srinivas Arava Bhumi
Sujatha & Patri D Prasad
Sunanda Gandham
Sundar Subramanian
Suseela and Kris Varadarajan
Swarupa Sudini
Tanjore Shashikala
Uma & S.G.Ramanathan
Uma and Sivakumar
Uma Natarajan and Arun
Usha and Bala
Usha Iyer
Vasantha Nagarajan
Vatsala Naageshwaran & Naagesh Padmanabhan
Vatsala Ramprasad
Vidya & Viswaram Janakiraman
Vidyasankar & Kiranavali



The following Corporate Sponsors have generously supported the 2012 season

Aman's Indian Cuisine
American Visitor Insurance
Bank of America
Chennai Sweets
Conlin's
Devi
GE
J&J
Lansdale Dental
PNC

Protect.a.Bed
Prudential
Susquehanna Investment Group
Thyagaraja.org
Vanguard



Conlin's

Digital Print &
Copy Center

Family Owned and Operated Since 1980

Proudly Supports
SRUTI

KING OF PRUSSIA
(610) 337-4460

MALVERN
(610) 647-6100

HORSHAM
(215) 323-9970

www.conlinscopy.com



SRUTI

The India Music and Dance Society

www.sruti.org