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Sruti

The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia



SRUTI RANJANI



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Table of Contents

From the President's Desk.....	<i>Santi Kanumalla</i>	1
From the Publications & Outreach Committee	<i>Shashikala Tanjore</i>	3
Syaama Saastri - a brief and personal appreciation	<i>Prabhakar Chitrapu</i>	4
Bala Bhavam concert - Priyanka and Mallika Dinakar	<i>P. Sivakumar</i>	9
Trichur Brothers at Sruti for Purandaradasa Day	<i>Dinakar Subramanian</i>	10
Bala Bhavam Concert - Veena Kanumalla.....	<i>Balaji Raghothaman</i>	12
Connect with SRUTI.....		12
The Indian Violin Story	<i>V.V.S. Murari</i>	13
Community Outreach Activities	<i>Shashikala Tanjore</i>	15
Ramakrishnan Murthy	<i>Sanjana Narayanan</i>	20
"Tradition: An Evolving Continuum" Program Impressions	<i>Shaaranya Pillai</i>	21
Images from the 2015 Sruti Programs		23
A Tribute to Sri N Ramani – flute maestro.....	<i>Subha Narayanan</i>	299
Ravi Kiran's Chitravina Concert Review.....	<i>Rasikan</i>	31
Kathakali Now.....	<i>Lisa Kraus</i>	32
Artists requested by the SRUTI Community.....		34
SAAYUJYA – A collaboration of music & dance		35
Tradition - An Evolving Continuum.....	<i>Akshaya Raman</i>	36
My Experiences with the Sangeet Samrat Carnatic Premier league	<i>Sruthi Ramesh</i>	37
Sriranjani Santhanagopalan Concert Review.....	<i>P. Sivakumar</i>	41
Survey Feedback from SRUTI Concert Attendees		42
Special Thanks to the Sponsors of the SRUTI 2015 Concert Season		46



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From the President's Desk

Dear Sruti Member,

Welcome to the 2015 issue of Sruti Ranjani and our final publication of the year. As we review the year and consider the state of Sruti at the end of 2015, I am happy to report that there have been a lot of good accomplishments that we can all be proud of. Sruti had a very busy and fruitful year in 2015. We presented a great line-up of established artists, while at the same time, branched out into new avenues.

The entire year saw great deal of community encouragement and support, contributions of my fellow board members, numerous volunteers, and co-presenting organizations. Collectively I believe we are constantly toiling to do better and better at every opportunity. That has been Sruti's proud history and probably one among select arts organizations that has ensured year after year, great continuity and innovation through the various performances and outreach activities

In recent years Sruti has dramatically expanded its outreach and co-presentation efforts with increasing and repeat partnerships with Annenberg Center Live, Montgomery County Community College, Painted Bride, and Hindu Temple of Delaware among others. We are at a point in time when area arts and cultural institutions are proactively seeking out to co-present with Sruti. With such partnerships, Sruti is no longer under the radar in terms of getting the attention of mainstream audiences. We hope to build on such partnerships and continue to educate and inform the larger music and dance loving community about Indian performing arts. Sruti's commitment and readiness to engage deeply with a broader population is clearly making us very valuable to the Greater Philadelphia community.

Our audience surveys conducted throughout the year, has recognized us for doing a number of things well. Here are some of the new initiatives and unique events/activities in 2015:

The Board launched "Bala Bhavam" concert series, an outlet for musical and dance expressions and growth for the youth in the Sruti community. This was in response to requests in the General Body Meeting of 2014 for Sruti to create concert opportunities for the youth in the community. The year saw 7 mini concerts spread over the Spring and Fall seasons, by Sanjana Narayanan, Shreya Adiraju, Sashank Sridhar, Srinidhi Ramesh, Veena Kanumalla, Priyanka and Mallika Dinakar and on Sruti day by Shivani Sowmyan. Another first was the live streaming of all Bala Bhavam concerts. We have already announced the guidelines for dance "Bala Bhavam" concerts and look forward to receiving applications for both music and dance in the coming years.

The Board launched a new sponsorship category "Sruti Concert Patron" where a family sponsors individual concerts with a contribution of \$2,000. The Sruti board gratefully acknowledges the families of Usha and Bala Balasubramanian, Vatsala and Sripathy Holla, Bharati and Sumathi Sena and Jeya, Ravi and Sheila Sankaran for their support this year.

The Board also gratefully acknowledges the support of the 2015 year Patron support from Vasanthi Nagarajan of Hockessin DE, Kris and Suseela Varadarajan of Cherry Hill NJ, Viji and P.Swaminathan of Ambler PA, Sridevi and Sarat Bhumi of Garden City NY.

Sruti co-presented for the first time a concert with Crossroads Music, an organization that presents public performances by accomplished musicians with roots in cultures from around the world. The event featured a violin duo presentation by Nagai Muralidharan and Nagai Sriram.

In addition, in order to reach greater mainstream audiences, we co-presented with Annenberg Center Live and Lively Arts Series of Montgomery County Community College, Blue Bell PA two traditional pure Carnatic music concerts by Chitravina Ravikiran (Instrumental) and Ramakrishnan Murthy (Vocal) respectively.

Sruti was proud to present as a part of its outreach campaign, an interactive Carnatic Indian Classical Music performance by Ramakrishnan Murthy, R.K.Shriramkumar and K.Arun Prakash at the *A Step Up Academy*, a private, non-profit, co-educational, non-sectarian school serving preschoolers through fourth graders on the autism spectrum.

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

Concluding the main season was the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage supported grand finale concert, produced and led by Kiranavali Vidyasankar. The program titled "Tradition – An Evolving Continuum" featured a group of 8 Carnatic musicians including Kiranavali Vidyasankar.

Bringing together multiple events including concerts, workshops, interfacing with various fellow arts organizations and presenters, grantors and the community was no small task for an all-volunteer board. I cannot thank enough my fellow board members – Balaji Raghothaman (President-Elect), Srikant Raghavachari (Secretary), Venkat Kilambi (Treasurer), Nari Narayanan (Director Marketing), Kishore Pochiraju (Director Resources and Development), Shashikala Tanjore (Director Publications and Outreach), Uma Sivakumar (Director 1) and Sundar Arunapuram (Director 2) for their excellent co-operation, hard work and immeasurable contributions.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not thank my husband Ramana Kanumalla for helping me and giving me feedback every step of the way this past year. Also the contributions of the respective spouses of the board members are very significant and without their support we could not have had a successful year. My sincere thanks to Nandini Rao, Mira Srikant, Radha Kilambi, Shuba Narayanan, Seetha Ayyala, Pichumani Sivakumar and Chitra Sundar. My family and I have been associated with Sruti in various capacities for over twenty years now. To me personally Sruti is more than just a classy organization that brings world class Indian classical music and dance artists and performances to the Philadelphia area. We are one big Sruti family.

Under the leadership of President-Elect, Balaji Raghothaman, the Sruti board spent a considerable amount of time preparing for the 2016 season. The efforts have resulted in a line-up worthy of Sruti's 30th year anniversary, including Sri Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Bombay Jayashri, Sangita Kalanidhi Dr. T.N.Krishnan, Viji and Sriram Krishnan, Sri Vijay Siva, and Sikkil Gurucharan, Anil Srinivasan, and Amrutha Venkatesh. In addition, the signature event of 2016 will be Saayujya, the Pew-funded project featuring Priyadarsini Govind and T.M.Krishna. The Sruti board is also planning on an event commemorating the birth centenary of Bharat Ratna Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi.

I am both honored and humbled for this opportunity to serve on the board this year as President and I take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate the incoming Board.

With many thanks and all good wishes,
Santi Kanumalla, President

From the Publications & Outreach Committee

Dear Sruti Ranjani Readers!

The SRUTI Publications & Outreach Committee (POC) is pleased to present to you the 'Sruti Ranjani', SRUTI's annual publication for the year 2015. Included in the magazine are reviews of concerts, stories from well known artists and thoughts, and comments and expressions of ardent classical music fans of varied ages. We have a collection of pictures from every Sruti program through the year to bring back all the pleasant memories!

If you have not done so already, please be sure to visit the Sruti Facebook site and also the Sruti Smrti blog site for plenty more beautiful pictures, commentaries and videos!!

Our grateful and heart-felt appreciation to all the contributors of the articles and photographs* that appear in this publication and other SRUTI publications this year. Photographs will appear in color in the online version of this publication available at www.sruti.org after December 12, 2015.

We wish you a wonderful Holiday season and very happy, peaceful and prosperous 2016.

The Sruti 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.

*Cover design by Balaji Raghothaman

*Kathakali dance pictures taken by Mark Garvin

*All other pictures taken by Srikant Raghavachari and Srinivas Raghavan unless otherwise noted

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

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage

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Samuel S. Fels Fund



Syaama Saastrī - a brief and personal appreciation

By Prabhakar Chitrapu

For some time now, I have been listening to, almost exclusively, the music of SyaamaSaastrī. It started with having had the opportunity to learn his bhairavi swarajati many years ago. (Hear a rendering by T.M. Krishna at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwluUk1EG3s>). The effect was magnetic and I kept telling myself (& others), that it must have been a composition created in a state of complete inspiration when the creation 'flows' through one and not from one.

The attachment grew steadily with other addictions such as, brovavamma in maanji, maayamma in naaTakurunji, maayamma in aahiri and the like. The slow, melancholy melody of maanji and the highly personal, pleading lyrics of the kriti give one the feeling of sitting by one's caring mother in aloneness and in the quiet dark of a deep night. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IXdFh43c1E> by Brinda)

The seemingly unending sangatis of the naaTakurunji pallavi are indeed sound sculptures whose contours bring to mind the delicate shades of early fall colors or the gentle meanders of a thin brook. (<https://onedrive.live.com/redir?resid=4A44D11B3205E026!5148&authkey=!AAGdmpgR18L2VaA&ithint=file%2cmp3> by Jaya Sharma). And the word maayamma, which SyaamaSaastrī so often uses, expresses such loving possessiveness, comfort and security of a protective mother.

So does the aahiri kriti with its undulating movements and slides in its melody lets one's heart melt in an imagined presence of Goddess miinaakshi (another form of paarvati/kaamaakshi) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwsC0qKs96I> by M.S. Subbulakshmi)

At times, he lets go of this personal possessiveness and declares kaamaakshi as a Universal mother - listen to this O jagadamba in Anandabhairavi (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRYYgO6fgaY> by M.S. Subbulakshmi) and trilookamaata in paras (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aGmKGKIQVw&list=PLf--o2_AVp--I-oYY6OQCrR-UINMtY9G&index=9 by Bombay Sisters).

Who is this Universal Mother - sometimes asks the rational part of oneself. Is She or It the state of origin of the living and non-living Universe, likened to a point or bindu or the beginning of the big-bang, filled with the potential of the living and non-living world that continues to unfurl into the unknown future?

This throws us into the realm of belief or assumption of truth. As a learned man once said, there are but just three ways in which we believe in things: direct experience, logical verification and the word of someone we trust. (I actually think that there is a fourth way, namely 'personal comfort' - which also makes us believe that certain things are true).

In any case, the belief in a Universal Mother could be due to the first for only a very few of us and logic is said to be inadequate so that the second option may not be feasible. This suggests that reason for belief in Her would, for most of us, be either that it is the word of someone we trust or it helps us walk through our daily lives with some psychological protection.

Syaama Saastrī clearly believed in the Universal Mother, a Universal Reality, which would by definition include kaamaakshi, and who was the window through which he interpreted this Universal Truth.

Coming back to the theme of Syaama Saastrī's kriti, my attention slowly began to go beyond the emotive aspects to the 'intellectual' aspects such as the meanings of his compositions and the structural aspects of his music.

I found the words of the durusugakriti in saaveerī intriguing, as he is praying here for good health. Here is the pallavi wherein Syaama Saastrī is praying for a disease-free and strong body!

Here is Balamuralikrishna (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEvjJX0B3B0>).

durusugaa, kRpajuuci, santatamu-

aroogadRDhaSariiramugasalupu, nanu

durusugaa = quickly

kRpajuuci = showing mercy

santatamuarooogadRDhaSariiramugasalupunanu = make me always of disease-free and strong body

Was he suffering from some physical ailment? Is anything known about how his end came?

Another aspect that arrested me when I first noticed it was his repetition of some words three full times! Repeating twice is not uncommon - In fact, there is a grammatical construct in Telugu called dwiruktaTakaara sandhi, which defines how two identical words of certain type are fused together to create a new phrase (modaTa + modaTa = moTTamodaTa). So, listen to these triple plays! ...

In the popular svarajati in yadukulakambhooji raaga, the word 'vini' is repeated thrice in the 7th caraNam as follows (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfRcP5rHk4G> by T.M. Krishna):

kanakagirisadana, ninugolicinajanamulaku, dinadinamuSubhamosageevani, SrutulumoraliDagaa, moraluvinivinivini

(pallavi: kaamaakshipadayugamusthiramani nee nammiyunnaanuu...)

kanakagirisadana = O Resident of golden mountain (meeru)!

ninugolicinajanamulaku = to people who serve You

dinadinamuSubhamosageevani = that You bestow prosperity everyday

SrutulumoraliDagaa = as vEdAs call out,

moraluvinivinivini = having heard the callings again, again and again

(pallavi = O kaamaakshi! I remain steadfastly trusting Your feet....)

In the sauraashTra kriti "naamanavini", the word 'nammiti' is repeated thrice in the anupallavi as follows (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duOYViL4EyE> by Rama Ravi):

Nemmadini niinaamameedikkani ninnee nammiti nammiti nammiti nammaa, maayammaa (naamaanavinivinu...)

nemmadini = in my mind

niinaamameedikkani = that (Your) name alone is the goal/refuge

ninneenammitinammitinammitinammaa = Mother, You alone I believed, believed and believed!

Maayammaa = O our Mother,

(pallavi = Please listen to my plea...)

Such repetition certainly increases the stress, enhances the tension and conveys the strength of his convictions.

While most of Syaama Saastri's compositions are already clear windows into his personality and complete devotion to kamaakshideevi, the kriti "kaamakshinaatoovaadaa?" in raagabeegaDa is particularly insightful. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3T9dlsLrxw> is a nice rendering by Vijay Siva).

Here, he is literally talking to his favorite deity, bangaarukaamakshi of the temple in Tanjore, where he was the main arcaka. In the caraNam, he talks about how he shed tears again and again thinking and thinking that She was his very own Mother. "maaammaani, nee dalacidalaci, maaTimaaiTiki, kanniiruvuDuvaleedaa, ambaa".

Finally, I took up the dry task of counting and classifying the compositions and music of Syaama Saastri. I referred to the book of T.K. Govinda Rao ("Compositions of SyaamaSaastri, subbaraaya Saastri & annasvaami Saastri", Ganamandir Publications, India, 1997) and here are some details:

The total number of Syaama Saastri's compositions was 71, composed in 33 raagaa's. They are ordered as follows, with the number of compositions listed in parentheses.

1. kalyaaNi (9)	2. aanandabhairavi (7)	3. saaveeri (5)
4. paras (4)	5. tooDi (4)	6. beegaDa (3)
7. bhairavi (3)	8. gauLiipantu (3)	9. madhyamaavati (3)
10. punnaagavaraaLi (3)	11. keedaaragowLa (2)	12. puurvikaalyaaNi (2)
13. SankaraabharaNam (2)	14. aahiri (1)	15. aarabhi (1)
16. cintaamaNi (1)	17. dhanyaasi (1)	18. jaganmoohini (1)
19. janaranjani (1)	20. kaalgaDa (1)	21. kaambhooji (1)
22. karnaatakakaapi (1)	23. lalita (1)	24. maanji (1)
25. mukhaari (1)	26. naaTa (1)	27. naaTakurunji (1)
28. niilaambari (1)	29. riitigowLa (1)	30. sauraashTra (1)
31. Srii (1)	32. varaaLi (1)	33. yadukulakaambhooji (1)

Notice that while popular raagas such as kalyaaNi, aanandabharavi etc. occupy the top positions, there is an unusually large proportion of kritis in the relatively uncommon raaga 'paras'! For instance, out of the several hundred of compositions of dikshitaar and tyagaraaja, there are only 2 and 0 respectively in 'paras'! We can only imagine what beauties Syaama Saastri saw in that raaga.

Among the compositions, some of the more popular ones are (in no particular order):

1. svarajati - bhairavi	2. svarajati - yadukulakambhooji
3. svarajati - tooDi	4. maayammaani nee - aahiri
5. O jagadambaa – aanandabhairavi	6. mariveeree – aanadabhairavi
7. kaamaakshinaatoovaadaa - beegaDa	8. deevibroova – cintaamaNi
9. himaadrisutee - kalyaaNi	10. biraanavaraalicii – kalyaaNi
11. broovavammaa - maanji	12. paalincukamaakshi - madhyamaavati
13. kanakaSaila – punnaagavaraaLi	14. ninneenamminaanu – tooDi
15. SankariSamkuru – saaveeri	16. saroojadaLaneetri - SankaraabharaNam

Clearly Syaama Saastri's three svarajati's stand out as towering masterpieces, composed in truly inspired states. They are immortal compositions whose perfect blend of sangita, saahitya and bhaava transport the listener to transcendent planes. Similarly, his compositions in aanandabhairavi are said to be majestic creations, unparalleled before or later his time.

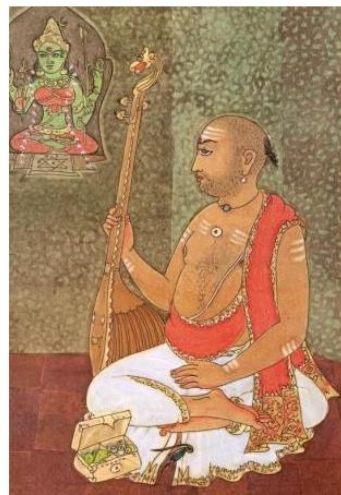
The types of Syaama Saastri's compositions span the full range, starting from giitams (paarvati in bhairavi, santatam in paras and saarasaakshi in saaveeri) to varNams (in aanandabhairavi, beegaDa & sauraashTra) to svarajatis (in bharavi, yadukulaa kambhooji & tooDi) to kritis!

Syaama Sastri composed mainly on his ishTadeevata, kaamaakshi in Kanchi and Tanjavur (the bangaarukamaakshi). However, he also composed on several other forms of kaamaakshi, namely paarvati, miinaakshi (in Madurai), akhilaanDeeswari (in Trichy), dharma samvardhini (in Tiruvaiyar) and bruhannaayaki (in gookarNam).

While majority of his compositions are in Telugu and Sanskrit, he is unique among the Carnatic Trinity in that he also composed 4 compositions in the local language Tamil (two separate kritis with the same pallavi enneeramam in raagas puurvikaalyaaNi & punnaagavaraaLi, paraamukhamee in kalyaaNi and santatamennai in paras).

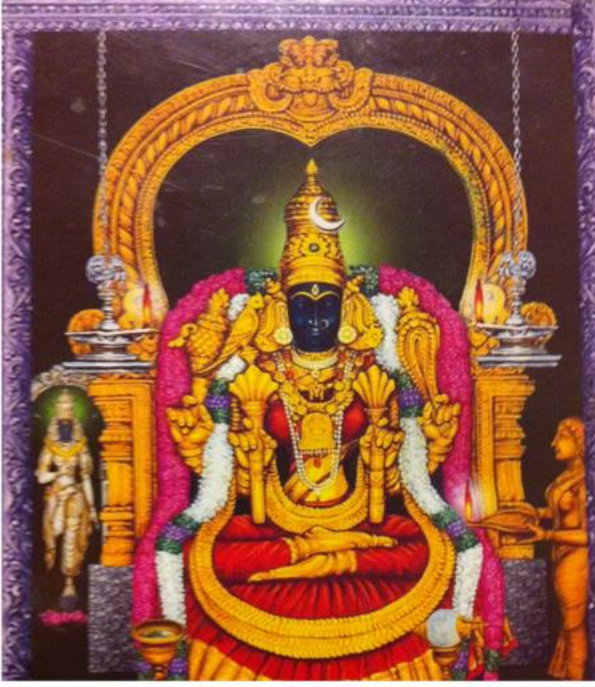
For those interested in learning more details, I would like to refer to a scholarly treatment on SyaamaSaastri and his music in the PhD thesis of Y. Saradhambal (<http://syamasastri.blogspot.com/>).

I would like to conclude this incomplete write up with a reflection on how SyaamaSaastri may have looked physically. On the Internet, I came across this rather old & original looking portrait of his. I have included a couple of modern depictions for your comparison.



According in Saradhambal's work referenced above, "SyaamaSaastri had a majestic appearance and a commanding personality. He had a beautiful complexion and always wore a pure white, slightly lace-bordered cloth."

His ishTadeevata was well known to be kaamaakshi. Whereas the main deity of kaamaakshi is in kanci, there is a second temple of kaamaakshi in Tanjore, where SyaamaSaastri was the hereditary and resident arcaka. The deity there is referred to as bangaarukaamaakshi, since the idol is made up of gold. According to history, the golden idol was also in kanci originally, but was moved down south to Tanjore during times of wars in kanci (between Muslim kings and viceroys of the Hindu king krishnadeevaraaya of the Vijayanagar empire). The two kaamaakshi idols look like this.



kanci kaamaakshi



bangaaru kaamaakshi

SyaamaSaastrī used ‘SyaamakrishNa’ as his mudra, which made me wonder about its reasons. In general, he used this mudra in two ways: One is in reference to kaamaaakshi, as SyaamakrishNa sahoodari, meaning “the sister of the dark complexioned krishNa”, namely paarvati – the root form of kaamaakshi). The other is self-referential, as in ‘SyaamakrishNa paalini’ etc, which means the ruler or savior of SyaamakrishNa. According to Saradhambal referenced above, SyaamaSaastrī, whose original name was venkaTa subrahmanya, was affectionately called as SyaamakrishNa, as a child.

Words of gratitude: I feel confident that many others will share my feelings of indebtedness to SyaamaSaastrī for giving us his moving gems of bhakti, dipped and drawn out in the sweet nectar of heavenly sangiita. The years 1762-1827 were blessed.

Prabhakar Chitrapu is a long time supporter of SRUTI and has served the organization in various capacities including President, since its inception. An engineer by profession, Prabhakar has a deep interest in classical music, language, literature and philosophy and contributes his views frequently to Sruti publications. He maintains a website devoted to Saint Thyagaraja at www.thyagaraja.org.

Share your thoughts with the SRUTI community on the SRUTI blog

SRUTI SMRTI

<http://srutipbila.tumblr.com>

Bala Bhavam concert - Priyanka and Mallika Dinakar

Review by Pitchumani Sivakumar

Priyanka and Mallika Dinakar gave an exquisite concert on Oct 3, 2015, for the SRUTI “Bala Bhavam” series - a brainchild of the SRUTI leadership team that has started to provide a great platform for emerging local talents in Indian music and dance. The sisters were accompanied by Siddharth Ashok on the Violin and Sanjeev Bala on the Mridangam. The unison and sync in their voices and their understanding was a stand-out feature throughout the concert – a critical factor that goes in to making successful duo performers.



The concert begun with Sri Thyagaraja’s Navarasa KANadA krithi, Paluku Kanda in Adi talam, that set the tone for the concert. Priyanka followed this with a crisp and refreshing alApana of Bhairavi and Siddarth matched this swaram to swaram in his Violin response. The krithi chosen was “cintaya mA kanda mUlakandam” where Dikshithar describes “SomaskandA” in all His splendor. Neraval at “Mangalakara MandahAsa” was well rendered and the ensuing swarams were brisk and beautiful. Young Sanjeev was upto the challenge all through and picked up the final kOrvai very deftly.

The next obvious choice was a composition by the third of the trinities –it was ShyAma ShAstri’s Triputa tAlam krithi “NeelAyadakshi” in Paras, which was handled very well by the sisters. “AmbA ParadEvatE” in Rudrapriya provided the mandatory change of pace – Sanjeev deserves a special mention here for ably handling the gathi in this Khanda chAppu kriti, particularly the chittaswarams after the charanam.

The main rAgam for the afternoon was PoorvikalyAni. Mallika started with a lovely alApana bringing out the bhava of the raga exceedingly well and Siddarth shadowed her effectively. His measured alApana was accentuated with some telling phrases. ParamapAvana was rendered brilliantly and the mElkAla swarams were capped off with a wonderful 16-beat kOrvai. Sanjeev presented a very well-structured thani – he forayed excellently in to Misra nadai and presented some very nice kanakkus, before rounding off with a roaring moharA and kOrvai.

The concert ended with a Javali in “NAttakurinji” ragam. The sisters did a great job true to their Guru, Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar’s focused training and justice to their familial roots in music. They undoubtedly have a great musical future ahead of them. “Sabhash” to Siddarth and Sanjeev who are also certain to carve a niche for themselves in their respective musical careers.

Pitchumani Sivakumar is a mridangam teacher, performer and a music enthusiast. He is based in King of Prussia, PA and a longtime supporter of Sruti.

Trichur Brothers at Sruti for Purandaradasa Day - September 12, 2015

Review by Dinakar Subramanian



Sruti began its Fall season commemorating Purandara Dasa with a daylong event at the Upper Merion Middle School in King of Prussia. The main concert of the day was a Carnatic vocal concert by the Trichur brothers - Srikrishna Mohan and Ramkumar Mohan. They were accompanied by Rajeew Mukundan on the violin and Trichur Mohan (the vocalists' father) on the mridangam.

This duo, whom I heard live for the first time at the Cleveland Aradhana 2014, has many alluring qualities - voices that blend with each other seamlessly, humility, a wonderful stage presence, mutual respect and admiration, and the ability to sing alapanas in tandem without a jarring effect. My main attraction to their singing though is their vigor and enthusiasm.

True to my expectation, they began the concert with lively enthusiasm with a wonderful rendition of the classic Daru varnam by Muthiah Bhagavathar including a tisram version of the muktayi swaram. The concert continued briskly into Muthuswamy Dikshitar's Siddhi Vinayakam and the really beautiful Navagraha kriti, Divakara Tanujam in Yadukula Kamboji. These three songs truly gave a strong beginning to the concert.

The alapana in Nattai that followed led to the majestic Jaya Janaki kriti by Purandaradasa. Interestingly it was the third time that day that the audience were hearing this song. Their treatment was elaborate and complete with brilliant kalpanaswara patterns.

The bright nAnoru viLayAttu bommayA by Papanasam Sivan in Navarasakannada was delivered effortlessly, except for some slips in the pronunciation on the word 'viLayattu'.

An elaborate and soulful Kalyanavasantham led to the famous innudaya bArade by Purandaradasa. This kriti definitely brought me into a meditative mood and was well presented by the brothers. The commonly used pivot kriti Nenarunchinaanu in Malavi with this lightning speed chitta swaram indicated that the RTP was just around the corner.

The RTP raga selection of Rageshri (Bageshri with the Antara gandharam as they clarified) can be disputed for various reasons. Rageshri and other similar ragas have a limited scope for improvisation, so the musician must take special care to prevent repetition. The brothers brought the ragamalika concept right into the Thanam. This practice, usually introduced in the kalpanaswaram portion, diminished the enjoyment of the RTP, suggesting that

ragams such as Rageshri may need to be interwoven with ragamalika improvisations to sustain and give heft to the whole piece.

After a flurry of Gowlai, Surutti, Arabhi, Varali, Kaanada and Shri phrases in the thanam, the brothers sang the following pallavi - *Gita Sangita Pitamaha Purandara Vittaladasa* in Adi. The kalpanaswarams also ventured into multiple ragams such as Anandabhairavi, Bilahari and ended with the swarams from the swarajathi Raravenugopabala. Other ragams including Hamsadhwani, Valaji, Kaapi, Kedaram, Mohanam, Hindolam, Hamsanadam, Brindavanasaranga, Varali, Saranga, Sankarabaranam, Begada, Thodi, Ranjani, Behag and Desh completed this section of the RTP. A beautifully structured concert suddenly lost its way during this RTP with too many ragams.

The brothers wrapped up this piece with the speed variations of the pallavi including tisram. Shri Trichur Mohan then concluded this piece with a measured taniavarthanam.

After a very beautiful Purandaradasa piece in Rageshri - Dasaranindasabeda, the brothers sang the lovely Jonpuri song, Eppovaruvaro, composed by Gopalakrishna Bharati. They followed one of Shri TN Bala's compositions (by request) in Brindavanasaranga with the ever popular Bhagyada Lakshmi baramma in Sri with touches of the great Bhimsen Joshi rendition.



The final composition was a Thillana in Hamsanandi that was mistakenly announced as a composition of Swati Tirunal, though it is actually composed by Harikeshanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar. I did confirm with my teacher Vidhushi G. Seethalakshmi that it was composed by Muthiah Bhagavathar on his patron and the last royal ruler of the Travancore State, Maharaja Chitra Tirunal Balarama Varma. The rules of Travancore considered themselves to be the slaves of Lord Sri Padmanabha of Trivandrum for whom they ruled the State. Hence the phrase 'Padmanabha Dasa' appears in the song and must not be construed as a mudra.

It was overall an extremely enjoyable concert from the Trichur brothers with full justice given to Purandaradasa's krithis. Rajeev Mukundan's violin performance was impressive. He is a very subtle player and his training from A. Kanyakumari showed with his quiet confidence.

Dinakar Subramanian is a musician, music lover and a long-time resident of the Philadelphia area.

Bala Bhavam Concert - Veena Kanumalla

Review by Balaji Raghothaman

On Sep 12, 2015 as part of Purandaradasa Day, Sruti also presented a Bala Bhavam series concert by Veena Kanumalla, a disciple of Shrimati Kiranavali Vidyashankar. In keeping with the spirit of the day, Veena presented a thematic concert with only Purandara Dasa kritis. The selection of kritis was a very carefully considered mixture of popular and rare compositions.



Starting with Jayajaya Swamin in Nattai, she moved on to Palisamma muddu sharade in Mukhari. It is noteworthy that this kriti was revived into popularity by none other than Sri R.K. Srikantan, the great vidwan who passed away this year, and in that sense, this was a tribute to him wrapped into a tribute to Purandaradasa.

Enu dhanyalo in todi followed, and Veena exhibited her manodharma skills with an impressive alapana and kalpana-swaras.

The other highlight was a smooth and elegant as well as elaborate rendition of Nambi kettavarillavo in Kalyani. She ended the concert with a crowd-pleasing 'Narayana ninna namava' in Shudda Dhanyasi, and finally Pavadisu paramatmane in ragamalika fashion.

For all the kritis she rendered, Veena presented all the charanas, not just the first two or three as has become the vogue in recent years. She had also taken a lot of effort to learn the diction, and her rendition of the Kannada lyrics was almost flawless. The audience was enthusiastic in their appreciation of Veena's talents as well as her hard work in preparing for her performance.

Balaji Raghothaman is on the Sruti Board of Directors and is currently serving as President-Elect. He will be the President of the Sruti Board for the year 2016. He lives in Chester Springs, PA with his wife and two children.

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Email – srutiphila@gmail.com

Web – www.sruti.org

Phone – (267) 797-7006

The Indian Violin Story

By V.V.S. Murari

Fore-Runners of the Present day Violin

Many musicologists are of the opinion that the fore-runners of the present day violin, i.e. bowed musical instruments, first made their appearance in India. As early as the 7th century A.D. many literary works and treatises on music speak of bowed musical instruments. Further, it is believed that such instruments were popularized in countries outside India by traders and Buddhist missionaries.

Several temple sculptures in India, dating back to the tenth century A.D. attest to the fact that bowed instruments were indigenous to India. A case in point is the temple in Thirumakudalu in Mysore state where the Kurma Veena being played by a female is sculpturally depicted. This instrument is played using a bow. Like wise there are many such sculptures in various temples across India.

Here are the list of bowed Instruments from different parts of India which are similar to the modern day Violin.

Ravana Hastha - West India

Veenai Kunju - Kerala

Kingkri – Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra

Pena - Manipur

Kenra - Orissa

Panam - Orissa

Sarinda – Bihar

The first stringed instrument to be played with a bow and that which is the predecessor to all such instruments is the most ancient Ravana Hastha. Other names for the instruments are –

Ravanaasthiram, Ravanahatho, Ravaneshwaram.

Though many reasons have been cited to support the theory that the forerunners of the present day violin were native to India, they have not been established as facts. This may be due to the fact that the marking of such instruments never kept pace with the growth and development that music enjoyed. The only exception is the sarangi whose fame paralleled that of music.

Besides, all subsequent bowed instruments that made their appearance were more or less identical to the Ravaneshwaram and either due to the dictates of tradition or because of their own shortcomings, these instruments made an early exit.

Moreover, it may not have been possible to popularize such instruments as their custodians were ancient and isolated tribes. Ravages of nature, persecution and discrimination are all factors that can be attributed to the absence of exponents in this field and the disappearance of such instruments for good.

Modern Day Violin in India

European music made its debut on the Indian cultural scene when India was under the British. The brand of music that greatly attracted Indians was the band music. Succumbing to the irresistible charm of European music, Indian musicians not only began using western instruments such as the clarinet, harmonium and violin, but also modified them in such a way as to suit the needs of indigenous music.

The Maharaja of Tanjore appointed Esig Johnson as the violinist among his court musicians and he also appointed an Irishman, Agnees Bruce to teach local musicians the European music. Outstanding among such musicians who excelled at playing western musical instruments was a Tanjore minister, Senathuranthara R.Varahappaiyya. In 1848, he was honored by the king of Tanjore for his mastery of western musical instruments.

There is evidence to show that the violin was used in concerts in India before 1800 A.D. In the palace of Tippu Sultan in Sri Ranga Pattinam, near Mysore, there is a painting dated 1784 which depicts two female vocalists accompanied by a violinist and mridangist - also female.

Violin Virtuosos

The honor of introducing the violin into the carnatic music circuit goes to **Baluswami Dikshitar** (1786-1858), the youngest brother of Muthuswami Dikshitar. Born in Tiruvarur on June 21st, 1786, Baluswami was a versatile genius.

While young, he accompanied his father to a place called Manali, near Madras (now Chennai). At Manali, there lived a great connoisseur of music named Chinnaswami Mudaliar whose entire life was devoted to promoting music and honoring musicians. Baluswami stayed with him for a number of years during which time he had the opportunity to listen to band music of the Europeans at Fort St. George. Noticing Baluswami's keen interest, Chinnaswami Mudaliar engaged a European violinist to give Baluswami lessons in Violin playing for three years. In the history of South Indian music, Balaswami Dikshitar happens to be the first to receive systematic training in the technique of violin play and later adapt it successfully for playing carnatic music.

He was appointed as a court musician by Rajah of Ettayapuram in the year 1824.

Vadivelu (1810-1847) was born into a family of traditional dance instructors. He was the youngest of the four brothers who were musicians at the court of Tanjore and were popularly known as Tanjore Quartette.

Vadivelu received his musical training from Sri. Muthuswami Dikshitar and learnt to play the violin from European missionary Schwartz. He was later appointed as the court musician and scholar at Travancore by Maharaja Swathi Tirunal. The crowning glory of Vadivelu's achievement was his solo violin concert in 1834, a first in the history of Carnatic music. For this, Maharaja Swathi Tirunal presented him with a violin made of ivory. Even the bow was made of ivory and the pegs were shaped like conch shells. This violin is still sacredly treasured and guarded by the Ponniah family of Tanjore.

Other significant contributors in those times were –

Tirukkodikaval Krishnayyar (1857-1913) - A significant accompanist who reproduced the voice (lyrics) on violin.

Govindasamy Pillai (1878-1931) - Popularized the Thaana Vil (Staccato bowing).

Mysore Chowdiah a legendary violinist was a thinker and an innovator. He was the one who pioneered the seven stringed violin where three extra strings were added to the first, second and third strings. The added string in each case was tuned an octave below the contiguous string.

Game Changers of Violin artistry in Carnatic Music & Evolution of Styles

Carnatic music started flourishing from the late 1940s and underwent lot of changes with advancement of both fingering and bowing techniques. The four violin legends below were instrumental in forming their own specific style of violin play and created a deep rooted impact in the field of Carnatic Music for the coming years. There

has not been a single style evolved till date after these four legends. Whoever performing violin today in the carnatic music field adapts to one of the four styles of these legends. These legends' legacy is being carried out by their children whose name are listed as under.

Lalgudi G Jayaraman (1930 - 2013) - Lalgudi Tradition or Lalgudi Bhaani

M.S.Gopalakrishnan (1931- 2013) - Parur Tradition or M.S.G. Bhaani

T.N.Krishnan (1928) - Tripunithura Tradition or T.N.K. Bhaani

V.V.Subrahmanyam (1944) - Vadakkencheri Tradition or V.V.S Bhaani

Carrying forward the legacy: The Torch Bearers

Lalgudi Bhaani - Lalgudi G.J.R.Krishnan, Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi

M.S.G. Bhaani - M.Narmada

T.N.K. Bhaani - Sriram Krishnan, Viji Krishnan

V.V.S. Bhaani - V.V.S.Murari

V.V.S. Murari, a renowned violinist, composer, educator is the 4th generation musician of his family. Murari has worked with world class musicians & composers in many projects & traveled extensively being part of many national & international festivals. He is the Founder & Director of VVS Foundation imparting musical knowledge to the aspirants across the globe.

Community Outreach Activities

Compiled by Shashikala Tanjore

This year, SRUTI organized various outreach activities in the Greater Delaware valley with the primary purpose of introducing and spreading the knowledge and understanding of the rich cultural art form that is Indian Classical music and dance.

Lecture-Demonstration at the Friends Select School

SRUTI was invited by the Friends Select School in Center City, Philadelphia, to introduce Indian music and dance to their high school students, as part of their yearly Intersession program, which focused this year on South Asia. As a result, we made two presentations on March 17, 2015. The setting was the historic Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in downtown Philadelphia. The presenters were Pitchumani Sivakumar and Madhavi Ratnagiri, both long time Sruti members and valuable contributors.

First, Sivakumar gave a tremendous synopsis of Carnatic music. He started with the concepts of melody, and the anatomy of a raaga, and provided comparisons to the western scale. Then he moved to the rhythm aspects, and the concepts of tala and laya. The students got a glimpse of the mathematical foundations behind talas, nadais etc., Sivakumar focused on the percussion instruments. With practical demonstrations he showed the complex mathematically accurate thalam system.

As a conclusion to his lecdem Madhavi Ratnagiri joined in, complementing the mridangam beats with dance sequences. Madhavi Ratnagiri started her session with the roots of Indian Classical dance, the unique hand



gestures, facial expressions and foot movements. She then had the students assemble into smaller groups with specific tasks and dance steps to practice! This left the children awe and wonder at the complicated dance forms.

Madhavi followed with a very interactive presentation on Indian dance forms, with emphasis on Bharatanatyam. She had the students trying out the basics of aramandi, steps, abhinaya etc. She then showed videos of various styles - Kathak, Kathakali, Mohini Attam, Bharatanatyam - and pointed out the special aspects of each dance form.



More details at this site: <http://srutipihla.tumblr.com/post/114245923055/reaching-the-community>

Students who attended the outreach events had this to say:

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

- **Lizzy A.** (Friends Select School)

"Gave us a lot of insight on the depth of Indian music and rhythm. There is a lot of math involved that I hadn't realized before this presentation."

- **Emma M.** (Friends Select School)



Workshop at the Southwark School



Madhavi Ratnagiri also presented a workshop to young children at the Southwark School, Philadelphia. Madhavi danced and told stories to the students with a special emphasis on exposing the students to a wide range of musical cultures from around the world. She also taught the children some dance gestures and their meanings and at the end of the presentation, danced!

The Southwark school blogged the event with a write-up, pictures and video at the following link:

<http://southwarkschoolk8.blogspot.com/2015/04/sruti-india-music-dance-society-visits.html>

This from Madhavi: “It was a lot of fun doing this workshop with the little kids of Southwark. They have a very loving and kind demeanor that was quite touching. I was given an open invitation by the class teacher to visit any time and work permitting I am planning to take her up on that offer!!”

The school blog had the following remarks about this event:

This Monday, Ms. Palermo's first grade ESOL class received a visit from Madhavi Ratnagiri, a member of the [Sruti India Dance and Music Society](#). Mrs. Ratnagiri danced and told stories to the students as part of student teacher Ms. Frankford's unit on music and sound, with a special emphasis on exposing the students to a wide range of musical cultures from around the world.

Mrs. R. used dance movements to represent different animals as she narrated a folktale about a clever rabbit who outwits a hungry but not very smart lion. The rabbit tricks him into chasing his own reflection and falling into a well. She also taught the children some dance gestures and their meanings and at the end of the presentation, danced! The students had a lot of questions for Mrs. R., and were particularly interested in knowing how she had learned to dance, and what languages she speaks at home.

The students had a great time and said goodbye to Mrs. R. with one of the new words and gestures they had learned: namaste! Please check out [Sruti's upcoming events](#), they are an amazing organization.



Kathakali Workshop by the Sadanam Troupe

Sruti arranged a Kathakali workshop, open to the general public, at 7 PM on Wednesday April 29th, 2015. This was hosted by the Nardhana Academy of Dance and was presented by the legendary Kathakali Artist Guru Sadanam Balakrishnan.

Sadanam Balakrishnan and his team provided a highly acclaimed and enriching workshop experience on the Kathakali dance form that left the audience eagerly looking forward to the main Kathakali dance program.



Demonstrations on “Sollukattu”, the footwork involving high vertical jumps, intricate use of facial muscles, training methods and eye exercises, elaborate makeup, slow build-up of rhythmic and lyrical interpretations, the all-male approach and more, had the audience watching with appreciation and wonder.

Here is what some had to say:

“What an inspiring workshop it was! Truly exhilarating experience to be drawn into a space where a complete aesthetic is presented by a master artist! Can't wait for Saturday's performance.”

"It was a great experience yesterday to be part of the workshop! ! The experience was simply amazing!"



Five Day Workshop – Purandara Dasar NavarathnaMalika Krithis



Renowned scholar, performer and Guru Dr. T.S.Sathyavathi conducted a five day workshop on Purandara Dasa Navaratnamalika for a Group of 14 Sruti music enthusiasts. The group presented these kritis at Sruti's Aradhana Celebration of Sri Purandara Dasa on Saturday September 12 2015.



Fans had this to say about the teacher and the workshop:

"Her lec dems are amazing with a wealth of valuable information!"

"Fantastic offering! Congrats for doing this, Sruti Board!"

"Great to see this! I have enjoyed many of her lec-dems online."

"Great experience and feeling blessed to learn the Kritis from a great scholar. ..."

"Awesome workshop! So fortunate to learn from such a wonderful musician, scholar, and teacher!"

Interactive workshop at the A Step Up Academy

At yet another heartwarming outreach activity, Vidwans Ramakrishnan Murthy, R.K.Shriramkumar and Arun Prakash provided an interactive Carnatic Indian Classical Music performance for children with special needs at the *A Step Up Academy*, Jenkintown PA. Pictures of the same may be viewed at the Sruti Facebook site to get an idea of the artists' involvement with the little children.



Ramakrishnan Murthy

Concert Review by Sanjana Narayanan

I had been eagerly waiting to hear another concert by Ramakrishnan Murthy ever since his last performance at Sruti. Sure enough, his sublime concert on October 3, with sensitive accompaniment by his guru Sri R.K. Shriramkumar on the violin and Sri Arun Prakash on the mridangam, made a perfect tribute to the great G. N. Balasubramaniam.

Ramakrishnan Murthy (or Ram for short) began with a spirited rendition of the traditional Vatapi Ganapathim in Hamsadhwani. He then sang Manasaetulortune in Malayamarutham, followed by a lively, fast-paced exchange of neraval and swarams with R.K. Shriramkumar (in the anupallavi line *Dinakarakulabhushanuni*). The following krithi in Pantuvarali, Sundarataradeham, was a continuation of this quick pace, and Ram built up to a rapid, exciting climax in his kalpanaswarams, which was heightened by the mridangam.

The mood then shifted to become more peaceful and introspective with the Anandabhairavi alapana. Both Ram and R.K. Shriramkumar's gentle, drawn-out sangathis brought out the tranquil essence of the ragam. As he commenced ShyamaShastri's classic Marivere, it was dripping with the serene bhavam of Anandabhairavi. Ram's seasoned voice (very similar to the great stalwarts like KVN) and *azhuttam* made the krithi a pleasure to hear.



True to form, Arun Prakash heightened Ram's harmonious rendition with sensitive, soft taps of the mridangam and even intentional silence; the parts where he did not play were as effective as those where he did. The ensuing Yadukulakamboji alapana and krithi, Paramakripasagari (a composition of GNB), continued the peaceful flavor established by the artist's masterly Anandabhairavi.

Following the Yadukulakamboji was the main ragam of the evening: an intricate and thoroughly satisfying Thodi. In his alapana, Ram delivered the full weight and complexity of this quintessential Carnatic ragam. He reached the pinnacle of his imagination in his sancharas in the tarasthayi. R.K. Shriramkumar followed with a similarly well-developed and bhavam-filled Thodi alapana.

For the krithi, Ram chose to sing Thyagaraja's majestic Kaddanuvariki. One of his hallmarks is his ability to render timeless krithis in their purest form, thus bringing out the soukhyam of the ragam. The neraval was in the charanam line *paddutappakabhajiyincE bhaktapAlanamusEyu*. Both Ram and R.K. Shriramkumar performed the first-speed neraval with long, lyrical phrases that embodied the melodies of Thodi. Ram's kalpanaswaram included many simple but elegant patterns, which R.K. Shriramkumar cleverly echoed with a different twist. The kalpanaswaram climbed to a crescendo with a koreppu in Sa. Arun Prakash played a unique but very interesting and enjoyable thaniavarthanam that brought the piece to a great conclusion.

Next came a speedy, invigorating rendition of Emanipogaduthura in the rare ragam Veeravasantham. Popularized by GNB, it was a fitting tribute to the great vidwan as well as a nice change of pace.

The Ragam Tanam Pallavi was in Kamboji, and both Ram and R.K. Shriramkumar captured the cheerful sparkle of the ragam in the brief alapana and thanam. The Pallavi line was *Tillaiishanaikaanay enna punyam seiden* in Tishra Triputa talam (Chatushra nadai). Ram flawlessly transitioned from Kamboji to Abhogi to Jonpuri to finally Behag during the neraval and then followed the reverse direction during the swaram, bringing the RTP to an elegant finish.

Ram concluded the concert with a fitting selection of *thukudas*, like the GNB composition *Paramukhamelanamma* in Kanada and the old favorite *Dikkutheriyathakattil*. He also sang a viruttam incorporating the rare ragam Sarangatharangini, which was first sung by GNB.

I always love hearing R.K. Shriramkumar play, and this concert was no exception. He follows the vocalist perfectly and brings a wealth of bhavam and knowledge into his accompaniment. Similarly, Arun Prakash was as sensitive an accompanist as ever. He gives each sangathi exactly the embellishment that it needs - no more, no less.

What is perhaps most impressive of all, however, is that Ramakrishnan Murthy cultivated such an immense musical talent growing up in America. Not only was his concert a delight to any listener, it serves as a true inspiration to all students of Carnatic music in the U.S.

Sanjana Narayanan is a junior at Great Valley High School and an avid student of music.

“Tradition: An Evolving Continuum” Program Impressions

By Shaaranya Pillai

It was a great pleasure and honor to attend the program spearheaded by my guru Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar a few weeks ago. I was excited to see the culmination of the months of hard work my guru had involved herself in, along with her fellow accompanists. Having known about the basic concept beforehand, I was also eager as a learner to see how both tradition and evolution in Carnatic music would be presented. Entering the venue in downtown Philadelphia, there was a calm ambience and contemporary décor that both contributed to the cultural atmosphere in the hall. The performance stage itself was also presented in an aesthetically pleasing way, with simplistic and elegant décor, allowing the audience member to focus on the presentation.



The program itself was executed in a way that was not only novel and fresh to Carnatic connoisseurs, but also engaging and energetic enough to appeal to those new to the art form (the beautiful brochures were also helpful and very comprehensive in providing a background to each piece). Energy was a key element throughout this

performance that kept us all on our toes as audience members. The artists always seemed to be on the same wavelength and their energies synchronized, merging together to create a truly harmonious balance on stage which was a joy to be able to experience.

Going into the specific pieces I heard that day, I greatly appreciated that the first (tradition-based) half of the program started off with the thevaaram “TodudaiyaSeviyan”. I believe such a piece was not only apt, but also necessary to accurately give an idea where Carnatic music has its roots. The Poorvikalyani improvisation in “Ananda Natamaduvaar” also was quite engaging and exciting. The main item of the first half of the program, a RagamTanamPallavi rendered in Shankarabharanam, had to be my favorite piece of the first half of the program. The ancient ragam was explored marvelously by the singer and violinist, and was followed by the percussion solos in the taniavarthanam, altogether relaying the creative improvisational talent apparent in each and every one of the artists. This was followed by several upbeat thukkudas which pleasantly tied together the first half of the show.

The second half, focusing on the evolution in Carnatic music, was the part I personally was most looking forward to before attending the show. Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar had arranged and composed the pieces herself, so it was unexpected what we were going to hear in this part of the program. The new instruments that joined the performers from the previous act were specifically chosen in a way to show how Carnatic music has stayed true to its tradition while incorporating new elements (e.g. the keyboard, saxophone, etc.).

This half was especially thrilling to witness, as you could see the diligence and passion all the artists had as they supported one another and communicated with each other through their musical exchanges. I thoroughly enjoyed each and every composition in this segment of the show. The compositions touched on many special features and elements in Carnatic music that one does not often get to hear in one sitting. One that particularly intrigued me was the use of srutibhedam in “Hues in Hindolam”, which was probably my favorite piece in the entire program. The use of such aural illusions using the pentatonic ragam Hindolam was fascinating and clearly had the audience in awe. “Samsara in Saveri” was an especially intense piece which beautifully explored the ragam through some remarkable improvisation from all the artists. The ending “By the Brook in Behag” was a feel-good concluding piece, with Behag being a great ragam to end in, showing how the style of our northern neighbors has contributed in Carnatic evolution. A noteworthy crowd favorite was certainly the inclusion of the konnakol, which came as a surprise to many, as the artist impressed all with his speedy execution.

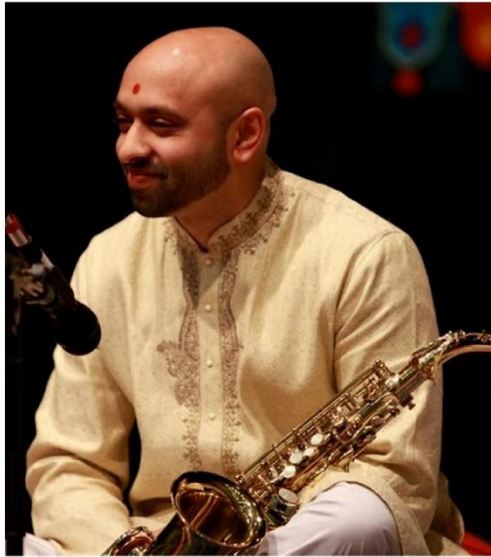
Overall, the program was a dynamic, engaging spectacle which took us through the amazing journey of this ancient tradition. It was a true celebration of the beauty inherent in the art form as a tradition going through evolution. With all the varieties of experimentation that we are exposed to today, I believe Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar and her colleagues have set an example through this program in how to appropriately highlight novel ideas in Carnatic music without taking away from its ancient beauty. I hope to see many more such programs with this talented group of musicians!

Shaaranya has been learning Carnatic music since her early years, beginning with her mother, Smt. Kiruba Pillai, and continuing with her current guru, Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar since 2006. Shaaranya also learned Bharathanatyam starting from a young age and completed her dance arangetram in the same year as her Carnatic vocal. She is also deeply involved with Western vocal and has given solo jazz performances. She graduated early from New York University in January 2014 with a B.A. in Psychology and double minors and has been working as a Teaching Assistant for an NYU course based in child development.

Images from the 2015 Sruti Programs



Images from the 2015 Sruti Programs



Images from the 2015 Sruti Programs



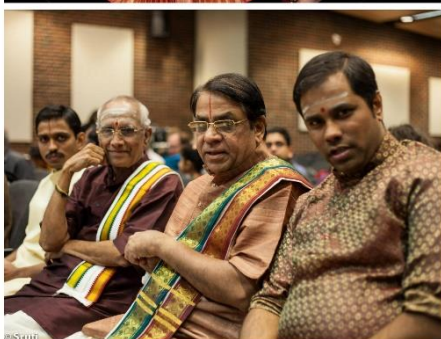
Images from the 2015 Season



Images from the 2015 Sruti Programs



Images from the 2015 Sruti Programs



A Tribute to Sri N Ramani – flute maestro

By Subha Narayanan



Pictures from The Hindu: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/flautist-n-ramani-passes-away/article7743461.ece>

As a teenager growing up in Madras – I would wake up in the pre-dawn stillness of an exam day – to sit in the back porch of our home in CIT Colony – and do a last minute review of notes before getting ready for school. It did not take a musical ear or great musical “gnaynam” – to appreciate the sweetness of the flute sounds coming from our celebrated neighbor to the back of our house.

Our neighbor – the ever- humble, ever-unassuming - Vidwan Sri “Flute” N Ramani – a musical legend – whose pioneering partnership with his guru and relative Sri T R Mahalingam (“Flute” Mali) – led to the development and popularization of the 8-hole bamboo flute as an instrument for playing Carnatic Music.

Sri Ramani passed away in Chennai on October 9 this past year at the age of 82 – a lamentable loss to South Indian classical music. The following day – the Chitravina concert by maestro Sri N Ravikiran – was dedicated to the legendary flautist – who over a career of 70+ years inspired so many of the younger instrumentalists in India and the world over.

Dedicating the concert held at Annenberg Center, Philadelphia, Sri Ravi Kiran and Professor Trichy Sankaran – who accompanied the Chitravina on the Mridangam – paid homage to the creativity of Sri Ramani.

“We deeply mourn the demise of the great Sangeeta Kalanidhi Dr. N Ramani. I have had a long association with Sri Ramani and with other artistes as well. In fact I remember my first concert and Sri Ramani’s first music concert at the Music Academy was in 1956. Since then we have played numerous concerts with Sri Ramani. I am sure he would stay in our memory for a long time,” said Professor Sankaran in his tribute.

In the words of Sri Ravikiran: *“Sri Ramani was one of the most brilliant artistes (of our time) and a musician of great capability. Master of both melody and rhythm. Very innovative and inventive in his approach. And constantly on the lookout for opportunities for refining and making things happen on the stage.*

I have also been privileged to play a lot of concerts with him – from my childhood – when we played a lot of “jugalbandhis” and even in my teens. Even as two year old he tested me in the Music Academy in 1969. He was always a very charming person who was very generous in sharing his knowledge and perspectives with the younger generation of artistes. It was always a great experience interacting with him musically as well as (personally)” said Sri Ravikiran.



Flute maestro N. Ramani, Palghat R. Raghu and Lalgudi Jayaraman at the Music Academy in Chennai. Photo: V. Ganesan

Born October 1934 in Tiruvarur, Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu, Sri Ramani grew up in a family of musicians. According to the obituary published in Chennai-based newspaper, The Hindu, Ramani had his early lessons from his maternal grandfather Azhiyur Narayanasami Iyer. Ramani's mother Saradambal was also well-versed in music. According to the Hindu tribute – "Ramani performed his very first concert at the age of 8". The turning point in Ramani's career was when he became a disciple of his maternal uncle and eminent flautist,^[2] the late T. R. Mahalingam (known more

commonly as "Flute Mali"), who first popularized the Carnatic flute in Indian music. By the age of 11 years, Ramani accompanied his guru (and maternal uncle) T. R. Mahalingam in a concert for the first time."

The newspaper quotes his son Mohan: "His first concert was held at the Sikkil Singaravelar temple. While playing in Nagapattinam, Mali listened to him and invited him to Chennai to continue his lessons. He moved to Chennai in 1950," said his son N. Mohan.

Ramani was an innovator as evidenced by one of the concepts he pioneered in 1960 — "Venu, Veena and Violin" - a coming together of three different musical instruments and featuring Ramani on the Flute accompanied by Trivandram Venkatraman on the Veena and Lalgudi G. Jayaraman on the violin was a hit in Madras and resulted in many similar programs throughout India.

Historian V. Sriram said of Sri Ramani: "Ramani had few equals when it came to tonal purity and blowing quality. "One should listen to him playing with K.V. Narayanasamy to experience his great music."

Ramani also performed jugalbandhis with musical legends such as: Hariprasad Chaurasia, M.S. Gopalakrishnan, N. Rajam, and Pandit Viswamohan Bhat and even with later mandolin U. Srinivas.

During his storied career, Sri Ramani performed at sabhas and venues throughout India, as well as at major cultural capitals around the world - including the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, Sri Lanka and other countries.

Sri Ramani's legacy to Carnatic Music is that, while Palladam Sanjeeva Rao and his predecessor Palladam Sharaba Shastri, pioneered the promotion of the Carnatic flute to the level of a concert instrument, it was Mali and N. Ramani who brought international attention to the Carnatic flute through their own distinct flute playing techniques. Ramani later studied the long bass flutes of the North Indian bansuri genius, Pannalal Ghosh which he later had incorporated successfully in Hindustani concerts.

In 1996, Sri Ramani gained the most prestigious title/award in Carnatic music, Sangeetha Kalanidhi awarded by the Music Academy of Chennai. In 2007, he was awarded the Sangeetha Kalasikhamani award given by the Indian Fine Arts Society, Chennai; and the Padmashri Award from the President of India. He holds an honorary Cultural Doctorate from The World University of Arizona.

Subha Narayanan is a classical music and dance enthusiast. She is a senior executive at Accenture - a Big 5 consulting firm. She is married to Nari Narayanan, the current Sruti marketing director.

Ravi Kiran's Chitravina Concert Review

By Rasikan

Chitravina, known also as gottuvadyam, is a stringed instrument without frets. The sound from this instrument is close to the human voice. And it is a difficult instrument to master. Ravi Kiran is one of the few musicians who have mastered it. Indeed, his mastery is so total that "Chitravina" is now part of his name!

A major feature of Ravi Kiran's playing is his strict adherence to pure classicism. He rarely indulges in gimmickry or complicated swara pyrotechnics geared to elicit applause from the audience. These characteristics were evident in his concert for SRUTI on October 9, '15 at the Annenberg center of the University of Pennsylvania. Hemmige V Srivatsan on the violin, Prof. Trichy Sankaran on the mridangam and Ravi Balasubramanian on the ghatam accompanied him.

The evening's program started on a somber note. The great flutist Sangita Kalanidhi N. Ramani had passed away the previous day. The audience observed a moment of silence as a mark of respect. Trichy Sankaran who had known Shri Ramani for many years paid him a tribute. The artists dedicated the concert to Shri Ramani. Ravi Kiran composed a pallavi on Shri Ramani which he played during the concert.

Ravi Kiran began the concert with *Viriboni*, the classic Bhairavi Ata tala varnam followed by *Vatapi ganapathim bhaje* in Hamsadwani. A trend among modern day Carnatic musicians is to spend considerable time elaborating on a minor ragam. Many use this opportunity to show off their virtuosity. Not so Ravi Kiran. He did choose a minor ragam (Vasantha bhairavi), but he presented many contours of the ragam. The kriti was *Nee daya radha*.

Ravi Kiran is well known for popularizing the compositions of Oothukadu Venkata kavi. Today he chose the Reetigoula kriti *Koti janma*. The alapana was masterly. Srivatsan exhibited his expertise in the alapana. The kriti was played at a moving sedate pace. This was followed by "thani". Sankaran, the septuagenarian maestro, showed that he has not lost his touch. Ravi Balasubramanian's collaboration with Sankaran was delectable.

The main piece of the day was a majestic ragam, thanam, pallavi in Kalyani. The pallavi in Adi tala, whose opening words were Ramani dara muralidara was the tribute to Shri Ramani, mentioned earlier. Due to time constraints of the venue, the concert ended rather abruptly shortly after the RTP.

Ravi Kiran's concert was, as always, a very fulfilling experience.

An ardent admirer and lover of Carnatic Music, Rasikan has been a regular contributor and supporter of Sruti.

Kathakali Now

By Lisa Kraus

(Reprinted with permission from *thINKingDANCE.net*: <http://thinkingdance.net/>. All photos by Mark Garvin)



If you're at a theater event that lasts all night, your expectations about being entertained change. You don't imagine that either story line or action will move along quickly. A different kind of watching happens. Settled. Appreciative of minute shifts. People come and go, get food, drift off in reverie. And the set-up is probably intimate, with people sitting close enough to see the

sideways shifting of eyes and tiny flicks of fingers that make Kathakali, one of those theatrical forms traditionally performed in long durations, rich in what a friend termed "tiny virtuosity."

Until attending this performance, given as a two-hour presentation on the Annenberg Center's proscenium stage, I'd seen only photographs of Kathakali—its dancers in ornate costuming and highly stylized make-up. Through poufy skirting and layered jewels and jackets, they seemed to be intentionally made to look heavy (with weight as a sign of power and wealth).

Yes, that was the look here in the three sections of what was originally a much longer Kathakali spectacle, *Nalacharitam*, given by the troupe of Sadanam Balakrishnan and presented by Sruti, the Philadelphia-area organization dedicated to presenting the music and dance of India. The players' faces were colored in bright green and red (for the king), pale skin tones and rouge (for maidens) and oranges for the golden swan (skillfully convincing with a moving beak!). Apparently donning the make-up alone takes nearly the full day.



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

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

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



The plot of this drama:

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

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

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

The drama unfolds with hardly any of the big

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

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

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

But reflecting on this now, as a result of encountering Kathakali for the first time, I experience an edge of unrealistic nostalgia. I seem to be more attached to the traditional forms of cultures not my own than to traditional forms of Western dance. Change is inevitable everywhere. Adapting long-durational forms to contemporary audience expectations is part of the vital evolution of dances. How can they live today?

In light of all this, what of my first experience with Kathakali? I am glad to have seen it. Glad to know the extreme expressiveness possible with actions primarily of arms, hands, and facial features. Glad to hear the lovely tag-team singers whose voices ascended and fell in complex showers of sound. And glad that this tradition, one of the world's oldest forms of theater, continues to live on the contemporary stage.

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

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

Artists requested by the SRUTI Community

Abishek Raghuram (several requests)

Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath

Amrutha Venkatesh

Anupama Bhagawat

Baby Sreeram

Bombay Jayashree

Ganesh & Kumaresh

Hyderabad Srinivas on Veena

Kadri Gopalnath

Kala Ramnath - Violin

A. Kanyakumari (violin)

Kruthi Bhatt

Manda Sudharani

Mudikondan Ramesh (veenai) & Party

Mysore Brothers violin

Nadaswaram vidwans: Balamurugan and Kumaran.

OS Thyagarajan (several requests)

Pandit Jasraj

Ranjani & Gayatri

Sandeep Narayanan

Sanjay Subrahmanyam (several requests)

Sikkil Gurucharan

Saketharaman

Sriranjani Santhanagopalan

Sudha Raghunathan

T.M.Krishna

Trichur Brothers

TV Shankaranarayanan

Unnikrishnan

Veena Jayanthi (several requests)

Venkatesh Saketharaman

Vijay Siva

Visakha Hari

SAAYUJYA – A collaboration of music & dance

Raji Venkatesan, Rajee Padmanabhan, Kishore Pochiraju, Balaji Raghothaman

In April 2016, SRUTI enthusiasts will be treated to an innovative joint performance from two of the most recognizable names in the classical art world, renowned Bharatantyam dancer, Priyadarsini Govind, who is currently the Director of the Kalakshetra Foundation, and T.M.Krishna, one of the top Carnatic vocalists of today.

They will present “Saayujya – The Merging”, at the Annenberg Center Live’s Zellerbach Theater, on April 30th 2016. This program has been made possible by a grant from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage. In addition to the main performance, there will also be a music and dance workshop earlier in the week, at the Curtis Institute and the University of the Arts, respectively. There will also be a post-performance Q&A session curated by Tony Shapiro-Phim, a cultural anthropologist with an interest in Asian arts. Sruti has engaged Matthew Levy, an arts consultant and musician, as the outreach curator for the project.



Saayujya is a creative dialogue between the dancer and the musician. The performance will interlace elements of repertoire, form and improvisation from two distinct classical performing arts disciplines, Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music. It is a creative dialogue between the artists, highlighting each of their distinct improvisational techniques. While remaining true to their forms’ distinct aesthetic identities, Priyadarsini and Krishna will push the boundaries of their

practice through the creation of new interpretations of traditional repertoire.

In a traditional solo dance, the creative impulses are very much the dancers’ alone, and the musicians play a supportive role, subordinate and closely following the dancer’s directive. The creative improvisation, be it in the rhythm-oriented pure dance or emotive expression, is driven by the dancer. The concept behind Saayujya however is unique. Krishna and Priyadarsini, each with distinct creative instincts, while searching for common ground, are also pushing the boundaries of their own art with the other’s improvisation as the creative impetus.

From an audience perspective, the distinguishing feature of this performance will be the manner in which Priyadarsini visually responds to Krishna’s improvisation. As Krishna is performing the melodic variations with a music rather than a dance idiom, Priyadarsini’s artistry – and challenge – lies in the spontaneity of her response. Both artists will be going beyond their comfort zones. There will be points where the musician will take over the creative space and the dancer will take a backseat and vice versa.

The Saayujya performance will include the premiere of a new piece based on the city of Philadelphia’s historic themes of liberty and freedom. Talking about this new piece, Sri T.M.Krishna said, “the work will be about, and connected to central themes of Philadelphia history: liberty, freedom, expression, courage, free will, compassion, confluence, sharing and equality. Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam are about form and structure, but their

Essence is about removing us from the literality of life by creating an artistic abstraction of the human experience. The piece will be about liberation and freedom beyond our personal self, and looking at the larger collective. We also know that the idea of freedom as declared and documented by the founding fathers was not universal, especially towards African Americans and women. The very fact that people protested, fought and died, debated, and revisited and amended the constitution over the years has reflected, and continues to reflect human aspirations for liberty as a work in progress. Our process for the new work will focus on analogous forms of artistic exploration and sharing, on looking at form and structure not in a dry or even strictly beautiful sense, but to further critical questions about connecting true spirit of Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam to contemporary culture, of going beyond the physical and personal to the non-articulated and collective. I think within this idea is embedded the spirit of improvisation, sharing, responding and respecting.”

The Sruti team has spent a tremendous amount of effort in preparation for this event, right from the grant application and approval process to the execution phase. A website dedicated to this event will be launched at the beginning of 2016, which will feature blogs and other interesting material. There will also be a podcast produced by John Shafer of WNYC, in which he will talk to the artists regarding this event and provide his perspective as well. The music and dance workshop will attract participants from the arts schools in the area, as well as some accomplished professional artists of many genres who are interested in stretching their boundaries. All these will culminate in an exciting finale, which, given the stature of the artists, we can expect to be of the highest caliber.

Tradition - An Evolving Continuum

Concert Review by Akshaya Raman

Carnatic music is a classical art form from South India that boasts intricacy, rich sounds, variety, and beauty. In this day and age of modernization and technology, preserving tradition can be difficult. Some art forms are neglected or changed beyond recognition until they are finally forgotten. How has Carnatic music survived for centuries? The answer to this question is our gurus. Through discipline and hard work, gurus have preserved this beautiful art form and taught it to new generations. One of the most dedicated and accomplished gurus of today is Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar.

I recently attended a project by Smt. Kiranavali, *Tradition An Evolving Continuum*. In this twopart event, she explored two opposing but complementary aspects in the context of Carnatic music: tradition and evolution.

The first half of the event was a traditional Carnatic vocal concert, where she was accompanied by a violin, mridangam, kanjira, and ghatam. Smt. Kiranavali skillfully balanced fast and slow pieces, and a variety of composers to give the audience a delightful and thorough experience of the rich, traditional style of Carnatic music. She and her fellow artists showcased creative elements through improvisation including raga alapana, swaram, neraval, and a raga tanam pallavi as the main piece. These exciting exchanges between the vocalist and violinist created spontaneity and unpredictableness, while adhering to the tradition components of each piece. The main piece, a raga tanam pallavi, gave a powerful climax to the concert. Set to the majestic raga of Shankarabharanam, this piece required an authority and command that only a select number of artists possess. Smt. Kiranavali and her accompanists masterfully executed Shankarabharanam, as well as dipping into other traditional ragams throughout the performance. The first half of *Tradition An Evolving Continuum* showcased exquisite aspects of traditional Carnatic music.

The second half was a collection of Smt. Kiranavali’s own compositions, performed by an ensemble featuring several instruments played by first and second generation Indian artists.

She opened the second half with a piece in the bright raga, Jaganmohini. The dramatic start showcased the individual instruments, giving each its own spotlight. The finale to this piece exhibited the virtuosity and unique techniques of every instrument through a fastpaced climax!

The second piece of the evening was a masterpiece in Hindolam. This piece featured a fascinating area of Carnatic music called sruthi bedham. Sruthi bedham is changing the position of the *Sa*, to create the illusion of singing another ragam. Smt. Kiranavali did not only do this, but she did it four times to produce a total of five ragams! These ragams were Hindolam (the base ragam), Mohanam, Madhyamavathi, Shuddhasaveri, and Shuddhadhanyasi. True to its title, *Hues in Hindolam*, this composition flowed smoothly from ragam to ragam, displaying each instrument along the way. Each verse was transposed into each of the five ragams with seamless transitions. Additionally, Smt. Kiranavali took a concept as complex as sruthi bedham and made it clear and enjoyable to the wide range of listeners in the audience. *Hues in Hindolam* left the audience in awe with its intricacy and charm.

Samsara was the third piece, set to the sophisticated ragam of Saveri. Using the strings on the chithravina, Smt. Kiranavali plucked simple notes on the Saveri scale. Although this seemed like a simple start, it set the atmosphere for the rest of the piece. Meditative and reflective, this was a significant contrast to the previous piece, Hindolam. Uniquely, this composition incorporated lyrics through a short geetham of Shyama Shastri, one of the Trinity of Carnatic composers. The piece also included manodharmam interaction between artists through raga alapana, neraval, kalpana swarams, and a tani avartanam climax by the talented percussion ensemble. One by one, the sangathis decreased until the piece was stripped down to the bare notes it began with. The scale is plucked once more, as the composition leaves the audience with suspense and a haunting melody!

The final piece of the evening was a brisk piece in the ragam Behag. This distinct ragam came from Carnatic music's northern counterpart, Hindustani, along with some folkish touches. Smt. Kiranavali brought out both of these dimensions beautifully in her composition. The highlight of this piece was the vocal percussion, or konnakkol. As an art that is slowly fading, the konnakol specially reflected the core theme of the project. The path to musical excellence lies in valuing tradition. *By the Brook in Behag* was the perfect grandfinale to a wonderful night!

As a student learning Carnatic music and a second generation Indian American, this program was a true inspiration to me. I learned the importance and elegance of tradition, I witnessed the evolution and complexity of different concepts, and I was awestruck at how both of those things in combination keep the Carnatic spirit alive!

Akshaya Raman is a freshman at Garnet Valley High School with a keen interest in music. Akshaya learns Carnatic music in vocal, as well as flute.

My Experiences with the Sangeet Samrat Carnatic Premier league

By Sruthi Ramesh

The Sangeet Samrat Carnatic Premier league 2015 was a great experience for me. The environment; being surrounded by Carnatic music legends and listening to my peers performing was a very educational experience. I decided to attend this music competition when my teacher, Kiranavali Vidyashankar, recommended me to go.

First step were the preliminaries competitions. For the prelims I chose to do two categories which were varnam and Krithi. In the Krithi competition, I was required to prepare one krithi with manodharma for which I chose a beautiful piece in kamboji called Kana Kan Kodi. For the Varnam category, I chose to present Thodi Varnam. The prelims were held in many centers in the US like Oregon, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Delaware, California,

Texas and more. I attended the one held in the Delaware Mahalakshmi Temple in Hockessin, DE. On the morning of September 27th, my family and I drove to the temple from Baltimore, Maryland. It took us roughly one and a half hours. The prelims began around 9 o'clock and I remember being anxious for the competitions ahead. The first competition I completed was the Varnam. I recall sitting next to my friends waiting for my name to be called. Finally, they announced my name and I sat up on the stage and started to sing. I was quite happy with the performance I had given. Next competition for me was the krithi with manodharma, the main event. When I finished singing, I was relieved and proud of my performance. After all the competitions concluded it was time for prize ceremony, the most nerve wracking part of the day. After much waiting, they started announcing the prize winners. They started to announce the Bala Samrat winners (participants under the age of 12). Next was the Yuva Samrat winners (participants from the ages 13 to 18). Since I had just turned 13 I was part of the Yuva Samrat. They started calling the winners as I was anxiously sitting my chair next to my friend. They called first place for the Varnam category and my friend got the prize. I was very excited for her. Then they called the second prize winner which turned out to be me! I was thrilled but I was still nervous for the main competition, the Krithi with manodharma. Finally, they reached the Yuva Samrat Krithi and started by calling the first prize winner. The silence felt like it lasted for 10 minutes even though it was only 10 seconds. They announced my name and I was ecstatic. They also said that I am part of the finals held in Delaware.

For the finals, I had to prepare a Ragam Thanam pallavi. It was very interesting learning about how they are generally done and how to embellish the pallavi. Two weeks after the preliminaries, the finals occurred. I went to the Delaware temple again to participate in the two day event. On the first day, we got tested on important aspects of Carnatic music like paadaandharam and our voice mobility. In the paadaandharam round, we were tested on how well we could repeat phrases modelled to us. The voice mobility round tested how long we could sustain a note and the extremes of our ranges. The first two rounds were the easiest. The next day was the main day for the Yuva category since we had to present our RTPs and do the manodharma round. The manodharma round involved more effort than the first rounds. For this round, the contestants prepared two short alapana and had to showcase our creativity through an interactive kalpana swara round. Lastly, we had to participate in the main round. We presented the pallavis we had prepared to many renowned musicians like Chitraveena N. Ravikiran, violin expert Nagai Muralidharan, mridangam vidwan Tiruvarur Vaidyanathan, and many more. Each participant had about 10 minutes to present their pallavi. I was quite nervous and anxious for this round because my score for the competition was mainly influenced by this round. I got called number 10 and I successfully completed the competition. I was so relieved but I still had to wait for the prize distribution. Finally, when they started to announce the prizes for my category. First they called the overall winner of the competition. Then the 3 main prizes of the category were announced. In the next category, they called my name for best time management and I was thrilled and I immediately ran up to the stage to collect my trophy and cash prize. I was very excited about my win.

I recommend that many people participate in this competition since it is very instructional and it motivates us to get better. My favorite parts of the competition were the prize ceremony, competing with my friends, and singing in front of accomplished artists. I am looking forward to next year's competition.

Sruthi Ramesh was initiated into Carnatic music by her aunt, Smt. Jayanthi Radhakrishnan. She has since undergone training under various gurus and is now under the guidance of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyashankar's. She has won the top alapana award in the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana Competition and first prizes in Sangeet Samrat and SVBF competitions. She has performed mini-concerts at various venues in Maryland and Virginia, and has also been part of Kiranavali's group productions.

Sriranjani Santhanagopalan

Concert Review by P. Sivakumar

There is an adage in Tamil “*Pulikku piranthathu poonai aagama?*” that virtually transliterates “A tiger never breeds a kitten”- Sriranjani Santhanagopalan’s concert for Sruti perfectly exemplified this proverb.

The emerging young musician, the daughter of Vidwan Neyveli Santhanagopalan, truly lived up to her rich lineage and legacy as she unleashed a commendable performance together with Sri VVS Murari on the violin, Trivandrum Sri Balaji on the Mridangam and Sri KV Gopalakrishnan on the Kanjira.



Patnam Subramaniam Iyer’s evergreen tOdi varnam, Era nApai provided the perfect start, with the breezy pace of the cAranam setting the tone for the concert. Sriranjani then presented a sweet alApanA of kaNNadA following with PApanAsam Sivan’s masterpiece, Saravanabhava gUhanE – the sharp swarams at the end were the highlight of this piece. Murari’s shadowing of the sarvalaghus was commendable and so was the percussive support of Balaji and KVG.

Next came an elaboration of PantuvarAli with both Sriranjani and Murari doing full justice to this weighty rAgam. Sri Thyagaraja’s apparAma Bhakthi was rendered at a brisk pace with some breathtaking neraval and swarams at “Lakshmi dEvi”. Sriranjani then presented Sri ArunAchalaKavi’s UsEni krithi, Eppadi manam, in a sedate and laid-back pace. The loosener came in the form of “Nenarunchi” in rAgam mAlavi – the brigAs (particularly in the cAranam) were outstanding and the percussionists provided added spice with their brilliant strokes.

Sriranjani chose sAVeri for the main piece bringing out the beauty of this rAgam in her inimitable and mellifluous voice. Customary nervals and swarams were presented at the cAranam line, “nArAyaNee”. The percussive interlude was thoroughly enjoyable with both Balaji and KVG exhibiting their mathematical and aesthetic prowess. The misra nadais in between and the final thisram exchanges were particularly enchanting. Lalgudi Jayaraman’s khamAs tillAnA followed and Sriranjani handled it quite well with some silky touches. A short virutam and krithi, UllAsa NirAkula, Arunagiri nAthar’s Kandhar anuBhoothi in kApi was then rendered in a captivating fashion – was quite a degree kAApi! This was followed by “Anju vidha Bhoothamum” in Sindhu Bhairavi to round off a Murugan-centric thukkada portion of the concert. The concert wound down with a thiruppAvai in Suratti and a mangalam.

All in all, a very satisfying and fulfilling concert. Kudos to the Sruti team for hosting a great concert!

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

2015 CONCERTS CALENDAR	
1	Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana Community Event, Main Concert Artiste - Deepa & Divya (Vocal), Accompanied by Swetha Narasimhan (Violin) and Rajna Swaminathan (Mridangam) <i>Saturday, March 28, 2015</i> Hindu Temple of Delaware, 760 Yorklyn Road, Hockessin, DE
2	Carnatic Indian Classical Vocal Concert Co-presented with Hindu Temple of Delaware Malladi Brothers – Sreeramprasad & Ravikumar Violin - Embar Kannan Mridangam - Neyveli Narayanan <i>Saturday, April 04, 2015</i> Hindu Temple of Delaware, 760 Yorklyn Road, Hockessin, DE Concert Patrons: Bharati Sena and Dr. Sumathi Sena
3	Carnatic Indian Classical Violin Duet Co-presented with Crossroads Music and University of Pennsylvania South Asia Center Nagai Sri R. Muralidharan and Nagai Sri R. Sriram Violin Duet with "Sangeetha Choodamani" Sri Mannargudi Easwaran and Vijay Ganesh on the double Mridangam <i>Saturday, April 25, 2015</i> Meyerson Hall, B-1 (Basement), School of Design, University of Pennsylvania 210 South 34th Street, Philadelphia, PA
4	Nalacharitam Dance Drama Co-presented with Annenberg Center Live Sadanam Balakrishnan & group with live orchestra <i>Saturday, May 02, 2015</i> Annenberg Center Live, University of Pennsylvania, 3680 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA This program is supported by a grant from the Knight Foundation
5	DWITA – Exploring the Duality Of Life Bharatanatyam Indian Classical Dance Presentation Rama Vaidyanathan and Dakshina Vaidyanathan Accompanied by live orchestra Nattuvangam : Dr. S Vasudevan Vocal : K Venkateshwaran Flute : Rajat Prasanna Mridangam : Ramamoorthy Sriganesh <i>Saturday, May 16, 2015</i> Great Valley High School, 225 N. Phoenixville Pike, Malvern, PA
6	Sruti Bala Bhavam Individual Vocal Concerts Sanjana Narayanan, Sashank Sridhar, Shreya Adiraju, and Srinidhi Ramesh Violin: Siddarth Ashokkumar Mridangam: Raj Lavadi and Harsha Kanumalla <i>Saturday, May 30, 2015</i> Caley Elementary School, 725 Caley Road, King of Prussia, PA
7	Sri Purandaradasa Aradhana Community Event Sruti Bala Bhavam Vocal Concert Veena Kanumalla, Violin by Swetha Narasimhan, Mridangam by Vivek Ramanan Main Concert Artiste - Trichur Brothers (Vocal)

	Violin: Rajeev Mukundan Mridangam: Trichur R. Mohan <i>Saturday, September 12, 2015</i> Upper Merion Middle School 450 Crossfield Rd., King of Prussia, PA Concert Patrons: Dr. Vatsala and Dr. Sripathy Holla
8	Bala Bhavam Vocal Concert by Priyanka Dinakar and Mallika Dinakar Accompanied by Siddharth Ashokkumar(Violin) and Sanjeev Bala(Mridangam) Main Vocal Concert by Ramakrishnan Murthy Accompanied by R.K.Sriramkumar(Violin) and K.Arun Prakash(Mridangam) <i>Saturday October 3, 2015</i> Co-presented with Lively Arts Series, Montgomery County Community College, Blue Bell PA Concert Patrons: Jeya Sankaran, Sheila Sankaran and Ravi Sankaran
9	Chitravina Instrumental concert by N. Ravikiran Accompanied by Hemmige Srivatasan on the Violin, Sangita Kalanidhi Trichy Sankaran on the Mridangam and Ravi Balasubramanian on the Ghatam <i>Saturday October 10, 2015</i> Co-presented with Annenberg Center Live Concert Patrons: Usha and Bala Balasubramanian
10	Carnatic Tradition-An Evolving Continuum Vocal-Instrumental ensemble led by Kiranavali Vidyasankar Accompanied by V V S Murari (Violin), Nirmala Rajasekar (Vina), N Muralikrishnan (Electronic keyboard), Prasant Radhakrishnan (Saxophone), Vinod Seetharaman (Mridangam), Ravi Balasubramanian (Ghatam) and Akshay Anantapadmanabhan (Rhythmic solfage and Kanjira) <i>Saturday November 7, 2015</i> Painted Bride Arts Center, Philadelphia PA Supported by a grant from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage

2015 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	
1	Friends Select School, Philadelphia, PA Presenters – Sivakumar Pitchumani and Madhavi Ratnagiri <i>Tuesday March 17, 2015</i>
2	Southwark Elementary School, Philadelphia, PA Presenter – Madhavi Ratnagiri <i>Wednesday April 6, 2015</i>
3	Kathakali Workshop, Nardhana Academy of Dance, Frazer, PA Presented by – Sadanam Balakrishnan and Group <i>Wednesday April 29, 2015</i>
4	Purandaradasa's Navaratnamalika Workshop and Lecdem on Sri Thyagaraja followed by concert by Dr. T.S. Sathyavathi Vocal accompaniment by Lavanya Krishnamurthy Violin by Aditi Devarajan and Mridangam by P.Sivakumar <i>June-July 2015</i> East Whiteland Township Community Center, Frazer PA

5	A Step Up Academy, Jenkintown PA An institution serving pre-schoolers through fourth graders on the autism spectrum Interactive Carnatic Indian Classical Music performance by Ramakrishnan Murthy, R.K.Sriramkumar and K. Arun Prakash <i>Tuesday October 6 2015</i>
6	Montgomery County Community College, Blue Bell PA An Introduction to Carnatic Indian Classical Music Presenter – Kiranavali Vidyasankar Mridangam by Vivek Ramanan <i>Friday October 2, 2015</i>
7	Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA An Introduction to Carnatic Indian Classical Music Presenter – Kiranavali Vidyasankar Mridangam by Vivek Ramanan <i>Tuesday October 6, 2015</i>

What you said



Survey Feedback from SRUTI Concert Attendees

SRUTI thanks all who responded to the surveys after each concert. Here are some excerpts. We appreciate and value your feedback and comments and do our best to implement your suggestions when feasible.

Tyagaraja Aradhana:

This is an annual all day event looked forward to by almost all Carnatic music lovers; Good effort by amateur singers; Well coordinated. Enjoyable, good food; Nice start with saxophone. Great group renditions. Quality of individual singing was very good and enjoyable in the morning.

The quality of the individual participation is continuing to improve greatly. However, we feel there are too many participants and it is difficult to stay until the end of the program and show support - somehow needs to be addressed.

The children did well. It's nice to see the improvement in the quality of singing, thanks to good teachers in the area...There were some groups of kids where the quality was very substandard and it would be prudent on the part of both the teacher and the parents to not put them up on stage and wait till they are ready!

Bala Bhavam:

Great encouragement to the youth. Good job. Congratulations.

Very good concept. As was apparent today, the area has a bunch of budding talent and Sruti has done the right thing in launching this series. Hopefully it can be sustained. It was the right amount of time allocated for each singer - although it felt like some exceeded their allotted time ...

Congrats to the Sruti Board for pulling this off! It had a very festive air. Good quality young talent, well-executed day, friendly Sruti faces. What a talent!

Rama and Dakshina Vaidyanathan

Top performers in their field. Enjoyed the program. Would like to watch one more time. Excellent Dance Performance, thoroughly enjoyed. Worth the 50 miles each way we drove. It was an excellent program and really enjoyed it. The theatre was good. Sruti volunteers were very friendly. Lighting was excellent. The dancers of course were brilliant. It all made the show fantastic.

Rama Vaidyanathan was brilliant. She is a rare dancer who can be traditional and contemporary at the same time. The dancing was absolutely gorgeous! The women are very skilled dancers, making it look effortless. True art! Both the artists and the accompanying musicians gave a very high caliber performance. The harmonization by the vocalists added depth to the performance. The nattuvangam overlaid on vocals was also very enjoyable. The artists, especially Rama made the vigorous performance look effortless.

Venue - excellent organization -excellent Performance - outstanding, please continue to bring performers like these to our area.

Very good artists. Great concept, very crisp, just the right length. Prompt start, good venue for such programs (please have more programs here rather than Delaware temple). The auditorium has excellent ambiance. Very succinct yet highly effective performances.

Kathakali

Very different experience, first time experiencing a Kathakali performance! Wonderful program. It started on time and it was all very well planned and executed.

Everything especially the costume. Make-up, music and pakka vadyam. I am happy to see Indian dance performances at more central venues in Philadelphia, thus making Indian dance accessible to Western audiences. The performance --- dance, music, venue were excellent. The best part of the show was definitely the percussion. Rare, good dancing troupe. It was helpful for the audience to get the preview info. The notes were very well done. Excellent Music. It was authentic, and the performers gave a high quality performance.

Kathakali is possibly my least favorite Indian classical dance style. However, I was very impressed with the musicians standing in the stage for two hours singing for the dancers. I particularly liked the percussion. I appreciated the rigor with which the troupe adhered to tradition: a) with the authenticity of the masks: the detail of the makeup and costumes and the disciplined footwork. I appreciated the depiction of the swan by Sadanam Bhasi and of Nala by Sadanam Balakrishnan.

Phenomenal performance. Great going on the part of Sruti to have presented Kathakali (such a rarely seen classical art-form in the US) by such a famed artistic troupe. Great idea involving dancer Viji Rao for the story narration. It would be good if Sruti can introduce one classical art-form like this (not seen often) each year, or every other year.

Malladi Brothers

Talented musicians. Quality of music, professionalism in presentation; excellent group dynamics; Fantastic concert by Malladi brothers and Embar Kannan and Neyveli Narayanan! A memorable concert!

Excellent Concert Choice & good sound system. The concert was very good and enjoyable. The artists sang for more than 3 hours. RTP in Behag was novel. The accompanying artists were great too. The punctual starting is appreciated. The venue and arrangements were good.

I really enjoyed the informal atmosphere and most of all the music. While to some extent being aware of Indian Classical music, a friend at work recently told me about the concerts at the Hindu Temple in Delaware so I looked it up on the internet and decided to attend an event. I love music and have to say the show was very good will definitely be attending more in the future.

The entire concert, the communication between the artists and the songs and ragas that were chosen by the Brothers. Mridangam and violin have far exceeded expectation. Great performances by the artists with a wide selection of songs. 1) Fabulous rendition 2) great accompaniment & sync between the team.

Nagai Duo:

Beauty and spirituality. Great performance by all the artists. Pleasant concert and enjoyed it. I really appreciated the free coffee and snacks in the lobby. Beautiful music. Very well organized Excellent Artists! the musicians were sublime, fantastic interplay. The artists were amazing.

Purandara Dasa Day

Veena Kanumalla's and Trichur Brothers vocal concerts were very enjoyable. Nice selection of songs and excellent renderings in both cases.

Overall, great job Sruti!! Well managed. The time was very well kept. I was concerned as on initial read of the agenda it felt like too many programs were being attempted within this day and that we would be too tired to enjoy the main concert. However, the always lovely Sruti board managed the day very well. Importantly, all participants stuck and respected their time allotments and hence it did not feel tedious at all.

Ramkrishna Murthy

Loved the concert! Feel sorry for folks who missed it! Ramkrishnan murthy is one of the brightest young stars in Carnatic music. He fully lived up to my expectations.

Excellent concert. Loved the traditional format, selection of ragas, compositions and overall rendering. All the artists' performances were laden with feeling and mastery of the arts

RaviKiran

Good length. Beautiful and captivating music! Aesthetically pleasing setup and clean theater. Top level talent. Good sound engineering. Intimate venue; Ravi Kiran is a great artist and is probably the best in his class. We missed program contents as a handout. Annenberg handout just listed the artiste information.

Great Job as always! Good sound. Excellent musicianship. The artist explained the songs. Also involved the audience. Great venue. It started on time, ended on time. Wonderful concert by the artists. Gracious and funny musicians!

It proved once more what an authentic genius Ravi Kiran is! Impromptu compositions; vigorous RTP fluent rendition of the Bhairavi, Vasantha Bhairavi, Riti Gowla - authenticity and erudition! More than able support from the violin, the mridangam and the ghatam. Sri Sankaran and Sri Srivathsan were absolutely delightful

I appreciate Sruti organizing events in the city. I am sure it is more difficult and expensive, but may be the best way to educate non-Indian audience about Indian music. But there should be greater publicity about these events. I notice Sruti has started partnering with Crossroads, Painted Bride etc. These are excellent ways to draw in a more diverse audience.

Sriranjani Santhanagopalan

Great concert.....venue at temple always has challenges. Sriranjini is endowed with a glorious voice. The accompanying artists were equally competent.

Artist has a wonderful voice and is very talented. Beautiful voice! Prodigious talent! Like father like daughter. The first couple of pieces were good. Intensity, commitment and enthusiasm in the performance.



Special Thanks to the Sponsors of the SRUTI 2015 Concert Season

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Viswaram Janakiraman & Vidya Jayaraman





Sruti 2016 Events

Thyagaraja Aradhana with Amrutha Venkatesh Vocal	March 19
Sikkil Gurucharan Vocal and Anil Srinivasan on Piano	April 16
Priyadarsini Govind Dance and T.M. Krishna Vocal	April 30
Sanjay Subrahmanyam Vocal	May 7
T.N. Krishnan, Viji Krishnan and Sriram Krishnan Violin	May 21
Vijay Siva Carnatic Vocal	Oct 1
Bombay Jayashri Carnatic Vocal	Oct 15
More events being planned	Sep/Nov

