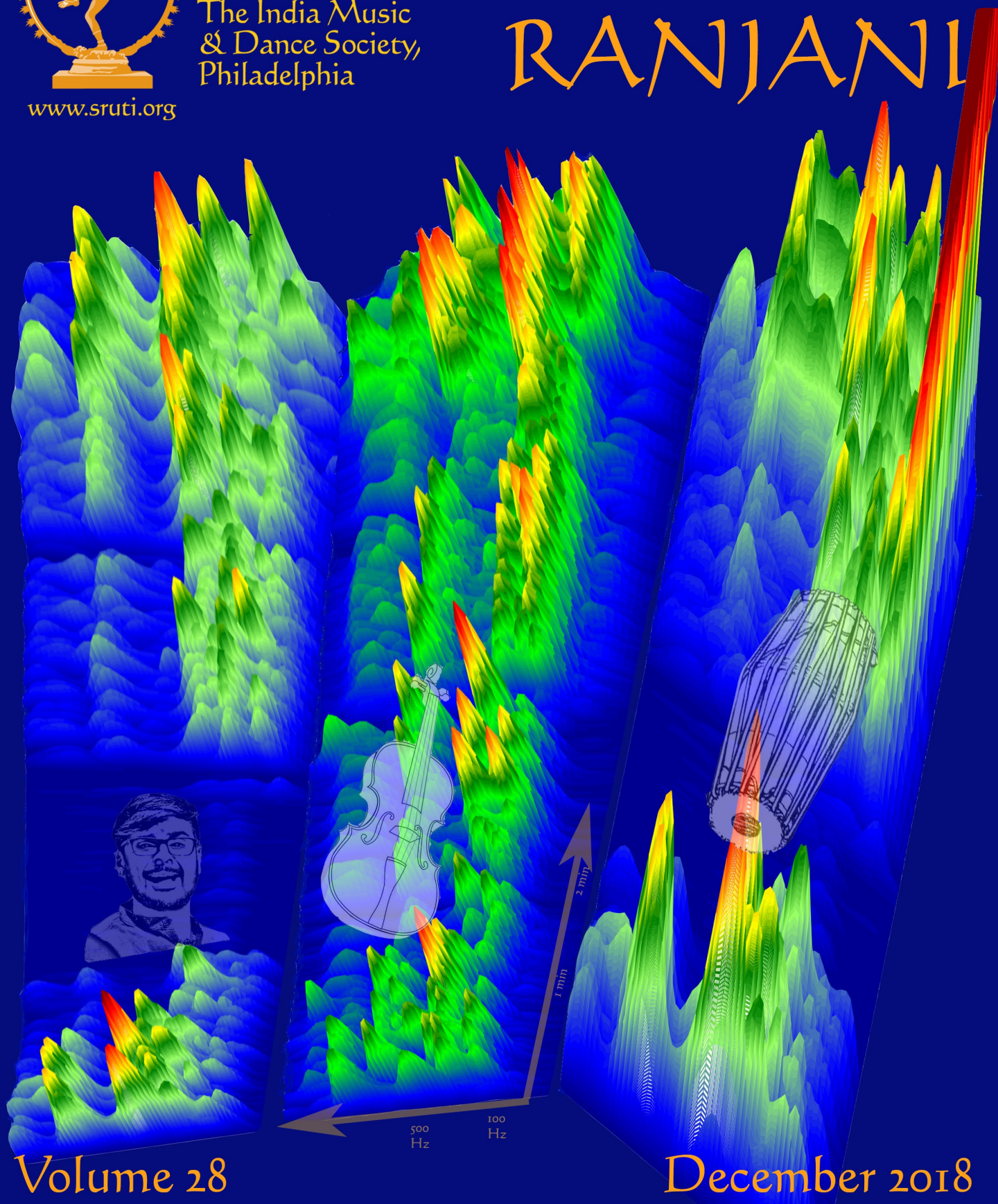




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Sruti
The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia

SRUTI RANJANI



Sruti Concerts—Down the memory lane (1989-1996)



1989—Balamurali Krishna



1990—Lalgudi Brahmanandam



1993—Lalgudi Jayaraman



1994—T.V. Sankaranarayanan



1996—Siva Sakthi



1996—Pandit Ravishankar

Photos—Courtesy of Panchanadam Swaminathan

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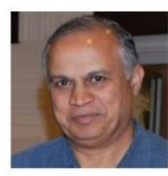


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From the Publications & Outreach Committee

by Nari Narayanan

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 2018.

We are pleased to present several interesting articles and feature items in this publication including:

- a) Special article by one of our favorite artists R.K. Shriramkumar to commemorate the birth centenary of Padma Vibhushan D.K. Pattammal (Born on March 19, 1919)
- b) Article on one of the great carnatic music composers - Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar by Dr. T.S. Sathyavathi
- c) An article on Kerala's contribution to music of Sopanasangeetham by a music scholar Vishnu Namboodiri and M.S. Gireesan who provided vocal accompaniment to Sunanda Nair's Mohini Attam
- d) Several contributions by the young generation and Sruti Youth Group members
- e) Reviews and photos of concerts, dance performances, workshops and lec-dem conducted by Sruti over the year
- f) Review of the special Sruti outreach event conducted at the divine surroundings of the temple hall of the Philadelphia Museum of Arts
- g) Carnatic Crosswords in 2 versions – one for adults and one for juniors who are learning music
- h) Nostalgic photos from selected Sruti events (1989-1998), courtesy of P. Swaminathan
- i) Notes from the leaders of some organizations Sruti partners with
- j) List of Sruti sponsors who have generously supported the 2018 Sruti events

Our grateful and heartfelt appreciation to all the contributors of articles and photographs that have appeared in this publication. Special thanks to P. Swaminathan for the inside cover photos and Balaji Raghothaman for the creative front-outside cover.

We wish you a wonderful Holiday season and very happy, peaceful, healthy and prosperous 2019.

Nari Narayanan - Director

For The Sruti Publications & Outreach Committee

Publications
and Outreach
Committee



Nari Narayanan



Prabhakar Chitrapu



T. Sarada



V.V. Raman



V.R. Murthy



Prithi Rajan

From the President's Desk

by Srikant Raghavachari



Welcome to the 2018 issue of SRUTI Ranjani. A busy year has gone by fast with a packed spring and an eventful fall. This year, we presented a mix of some great young talents and seasoned artists. We had a very balanced programming with dance, instrumental and vocal performances with workshops and community outreach events augmenting those to complete the years programming.

A few of the highlights of this year:

- Given the challenges we face with competing events and festivals, I am extremely happy that we were able to make full use of the goodwill that SRUTI has forged over the years with other organizations and was able to collaborate on six events with partners that helped reduce costs substantially and also helped to attract new audience to our events.
- 2018 marked our 10th anniversary of collaborating with the Hindu Temple of Delaware and we strengthened our partnership with the temple by collaborating with them on three events with a special one - a memorable concert by Padmabushan Smt. Sudha Raghunathan when she took the audience down the memory lane in an enthralling concert that went over 3.5 hours. I thank Sarma Garu from the temple for providing us the auditorium free of cost for the lecture/demonstration by Dr. T.S Sathyavathy and for the concert by Sudha Raghunathan.
- SRUTI took the dance from courtyards to the courts with the workshop conducted by Guru Rama Vaidyanathan where the participants learnt Madhurashtakam. It was well attended by over thirty participants, - teachers and students and was well received by the community.
- In addition to our marquee Thyagaraja Aradhana, we also had a Trinity Aradhana event in June, with community participation, Bala Bhavam dance followed by two great concerts. This event was funded partly by the PCA grant.
- While we have used the venue before, we collaborated for the first time with the Community Music School for the Violin-Viola Duet by V.V.S Murari and Vittal Ramamurthy. This collaboration got off to a great start and we look forward to more collaborations with them in the future.
- To enhance the rasikathvam of the audience and make a more impactful musical engagement with rasikas, we took the rasikas on a journey of musical appreciation with a lecture/demonstration on the musical excellence in the compositions of Muthuswami Dikshitar by Dr. T.S Sathyavathi.
- One of my personal favorites of the year was an outreach event SRUTI curated and presented at the Philadelphia museum of Art. It was a unique instrumental ensemble presented as part of the museum's "Music in the Galleries" series, featuring some of the finest young talents around us. The partnership with Philadelphia museum of art also provided free admission to SRUTI sponsors to enjoy the day in the museum. I thank Dinakar Subramanian for leading this initiative, Revathi Subramony and Uma Sivakumar for their help with the curation. Special thanks to Nari Narayanan for helping to put this together.
- We received funding from PEW Center for capacity building that provided SRUTI board members a great opportunity to visit and engage with art institutions and performers in U.K to experience their programming, interact with those artists and organizations to incorporate new ideas in our future engagements with PEW. I am confident these learnings and associations will bring some great productions on PEW projects in the near future.

- Our partnerships with Montgomery Community College and Crossroads Music for Mohiniattam and Guitar Prasanna events respectively brought in new exposure, especially the mainstream audience. For Mohiniattam we made it an evening of Indian cultural experience with a conversation with Dr. Sunanda Nair and dinner prior to the event. We received great feedback on this from the Montgomery County Community College.
- We leveraged Google for Non Profits and have standardized on leveraging organizational email address for external communications to ensure continuity in communications when board changes.

To present such wonderful events it takes a lot of effort and all this will not be possible without the support of outstanding board members and committee members whose enthusiasm and passion ensured organizing these events a joyous venture.

I am thankful to the efforts of

- Shankar Muthuswami, who will be the president for 2019 and has been a huge support in all aspects of event management
- Santi Kanumalla, Treasurer, for always keeping the accounts in great shape and ensuring timely payments of bills and collecting the receipt
- Dinakar Subramanian, Secretary for keeping the meetings on time, minuting, helping with the audio mastering for distribution to sponsors and also for the numerous impromptu votes of thanks that he delivered
- Balaji Raghothaman, Director Research and Development for helping us identify and pursue funding opportunities, ensuring that the reports for the grants are filed in time and for helping with audio recordings
- Nari Narayanan, Director of Publications and Outreach for always staying ahead of the game in all that he does and for working with his committee in ensuring that SRUTI publications shine with their cover and content and also for being diligent in getting the program notes created and printed for all our events
- Srinu Raghavan, Director of Marketing and Publicity, for the numerous email marketing emails that he sent, managing the surveys and helping us with the sponsorship drive and for all the great pictures he took of our events
- Uma Sivakumar for managing all the community event participation registrations and helping with the supplies and
- Revathi Subramony who in her first year executed exemplary coordination of Dr. T.S Satyavathi's workshop and enthusiastically carried out the tasks related to organizing the events

I would like to thank our sponsors, partners, collaborators and support staff at the venues who helped us tremendously in making these events successful.

I thank Bharati and Dr Sumatisena for their continued support and being a concert patron for Vivartana and Manikandan Rajappa and Radhika for being the patron sponsor for 2018.

A special thanks to Joe Baldino from MRS who manages the audio at our events. Some of the artists now know him well that they ask if he will be there for the concert.

I would also like to thank Manam Indian Cuisine, Chennai Corner and Saroja Sagaram for sponsoring the pre-event snacks.

I also would like to thank the Akshayapatra team of Mira Srikant, Nandini Rao, Geetha Muthuswami, Subha Narayanan, Raji Venkatesan, Santi Kanumalla, Revathi Subramony, Uma Sivakumar and Lakshmi Raghavan for the delicious post-concert dinners.

My thanks to all our committee members and the SRUTI youth group for their help throughout the year and also to Ramana Kanumalla for being a great support in providing a helping hand wherever needed.

During summer and fall, we spent a good amount of time in planning the event lineup for 2019 that includes Ranjani and Gayatri, Amrutha Venkatesh, Jayanthi Kumaresh, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Janaki Rangarajan, Kiranavali Vidyashankar and

Purbayan Chatterjee. 2019 has taken shape as an exciting year and I wish Shankar and the incoming board all the very best for a great 2019.

It has been a privilege to serve this organization for the past four years in different capacities and I will always cherish the wonderful memories and friends this opportunity had given me and I am thankful to the SRUTI community for this wonderful opportunity.

I wish you all a very happy new year!

Srikant Raghavachari, President

About the Front Cover

by Balaji Raghothaman



This year's cover design takes a detour into the intersection of art and science, that hazy region where magic is created from matter. We are all aware that sound consists of waves of various frequencies. Music is especially rich in its composition - the range and patterns of frequencies in music are known to be very pleasing to the brain, causing releases of dopamine. In this image I have depicted sample spectrograms of the vocal, violin and mrdangam audio tracks. A spectrogram is an illustration of the intensity levels of each the frequencies at each time instant. It can be thought of as a snapshot of how the brain 'sees' the sound.

The time progression in the cover image is from bottom to top, and in each of the three spectrograms, the right end is the low frequency (25 Hz) and left end is high frequency (4000 Hz).

I picked an 8-minute segment of the Ramkrishnan Murthy concert, beginning with the last couple of minutes of his Narayanagoulai alapana, followed by Charumathi Raghuraman's alapana on the violin, then finally the first few minutes of the kriti rendition (Sri Ramam Ravikulabdi Somam). One can see that the composition of sound is very different for the three musical instruments. Voice produces strong sustained peaks in the mid frequencies with gentle slopes. The violin's spectrogram has lot more texture, and a rich mixture of harmonics in the high frequencies as well. The mrdangam is mostly confined to the low end, with very strong peaks seen at the end of the time sequence, when Manoj Siva really gets going. (The mrdangam is silent during the alapanas, but we see some activity, probably due to the mic picking up the vocal).

Thanks for joining me for this fun little diversion. Happy reading.

PS: For those in the audience familiar with signal processing, the images were created using code written in Matlab - bandpass filters of 200 millisecond time segments, followed by a 2-dimensional Bartlett window for smoothing, and plotted as a mesh surface.

Balaji Raghothaman was the President of Sruti in 2016 and has been an active board member since 2015.

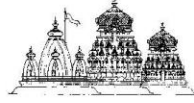
Ten Years of Collaboration with Sruti

by Patibanda Sarma

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TEN YEARS OF COLLABORATION !

SRUTI:

This year marks the 10th year of collaboration between Hindu Temple and SRUTI. All journeys start with a small first step. That was with Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana on march 15th, 2008 with the main concert by Abishek Raghuram. That small step developed into an exciting partnership over the last ten years during which both organizations showcased some of the outstanding artists that include Dr. Balamurali Krishna, Chitravina Ravi Kiran, Sanjay Subramanyam, Ajay and Kaushiki Chakraborty and Sudha Raghunathan.

To commemorate this special 10th anniversary year, this year Temple partnered with SRUTI for 3 major events - Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana, A Grand Vocal Concert by Padmabushan Sudha Raghunathan and A lecture demonstration by Dr. T.S Sathyavathi.

All of us at Temple cherish the cooperation and look forward to a more Scenic Journey with SRUTI.

Patibanda Sarma

President

The Silken Mother – In memory of D.K. Pattammal

by R. K. Shriramkumar



She plants a sweet kiss on the tender palms of Tanujashri, her year-old great granddaughter and bestows a beaming smile at the splendor of the human divinity. Ajay, her college-going great grandson runs into the living room and vents his latest arguments that he had with his sister, as the great grandmother listens to it with caring concern. At coffee time, she spends a light moment with Gayatri and Nitya, her beloved granddaughters, to whom she has bequeathed so much of her music and marvel. The phone rings and she answers in a raised tone, enquiring about the health of her grandson Charan and of course, of the weather in Adelaide, Australia. Her nonagenarian better half, Shri Iswaran mama, clad in shorts and shoes, announces his schedule for the evening at the tennis court. And, as he is on his way to his favorite game, she cries her heart out to the ever-disappearing long time family cook Krishnamurthy to give him his usual serving of fruit juice. In comes the vegetable vendor lady who dumps her huge basket right in front of her and the grand lady meticulously checks for fresh ladies' fingers by breaking the tips off a few and ultimately makes a good selection of vegetables after an interesting bargaining session and a patient hearing of all the stories of Kotturpuram that the vendor woman provides!

Smt D K Pattammal sports many more such happenings of her busy household with utmost passion as much as she is immersed in the nectarous ocean of the great art of Carnatic music. Much is known about her storming entry into the field of Carnatic music, her defiance of a male bastion, her redefinition of orthodoxy, her dedication towards singing for the freedom of Mother India and, not to forget, her meridian contribution to the showcasing of the colossal compositions of Shri Muthuswami Dikshitar. Pattamma, as she is fondly known to all, from babies to oldies, at 88 today, spends her time in the cozy quarters of her home in the heart of Madras, imparting to many, the invaluable wealth of



Author R.K. Shriramkumar (Extreme right) accompanying D.K. Pattammal

her experiences with music and musicians.

Her eyes would sparkle when she reminisced how the inimitable Nayana Pillai would sing a sprightly *niraval* at '*tapamu pogada*' of the krti '*Ne morabettite*' of Shri Tyagarajasvami. Many a time has she shared incidents, with a feeling of elation, about how doyens such as Shri '*Tiger*' Varadachariar, Shri Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar, Shri Maharajapuram Vishvanatha Iyer and Shri Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar have showered accolades on her for her strict and highly dignified adherence to *sampradaya*. The violin maestro, Shri *Papa* Venkataramayya, who was her neighbor when she lived in the suburb of T Nagar for a while, had invited her often to his home, to listen to her soulful rendition of several monumental *krtis*. A new leaf was turned when the mridangam genius Shri Palghat Mani Iyer offered to play for Pattamma, breaking the long time bane of the male-female divide. Pattamma's special affinity towards the Dhanammal family and their music was intense. She had sung for numerous important occasions in their household and was so enamored by Smt Balasarasvati's *abhinaya*, that she would re-enact a few of her *sancharis* for some of the *padams*; one such memorable exposition was for the *Saurashtra padam* '*Aduvum sholluval*'. She would choke with emotion each time she recounted how Shri Ambi Dikshitar wholeheartedly offered to teach her after listening to her *Shri Subrahmanyaya namaste* and how Shri T L Venkatarama Iyer literally held his last breath, eagerly awaiting the news of her being awarded the prestigious *Sangita Kalanidhi*.

Nobody has been dearer to her than her illustrious brother Shri D K Jayaraman. Having raised him in her arms and been much more than an elder sister and a guru to him, Pattamma would always recall with motherly pride and love, his unparalleled intelligence, his supreme sense of aesthetics and the manner in which he scaled the glorious heights by his untiring efforts. A day wouldn't pass without chatting with him for at least a while on the telephone, be it a hilarious conversation or even a heated argument. But to chat was a must. Tears would roll down her wrinkled cheeks when the thought passed that she had lost him to the gods. Nevertheless she would always console herself by quoting an adage from vedantic literature about the temporal nature of all creation.

Shri DKJ also regarded his sister more than the most precious. He would at times instruct a few of us to fetch either a recording or a notation of a krti from Pattamma and it was always a great pleasure to visit her. A very caring guru that Shri DKJ was, he would keep Pattamma posted of concert schedules, achievements and progress of all his *shishyas*. In fact, it was at his recommendation that I played my first concert for Pattamma, one that still lingers fresh in memory and is undoubtedly one of my most cherished. Since then, it has been my great fortune to have the gracious guidance, support and encouragement from the Iswaran couple.

Accompanying Pattamma was always a very enjoyable experience. All her concerts were immense sources of knowledge. Many a time would she sing rare compositions, unheard by many, and present them with an exquisite touch of class. Her concerts were always powerful incentives to learn more and they really helped in upgrading one's repertoire. The values of tradition, authenticity and *pathantara* reigned supreme in each one of her highly dignified concert presentations.

Learning from her is a joy, one of its kind. She would revel in the musical bliss of the krti and would often go down memory lane, taking us also along with her on to the vintage golden era of Carnatic music and musicians. Much as it would be an enlightening experience to listen to her talk about the greatness of our music, it is also great fun to listen to her narrations of numerous anecdotes in her characteristic *North Arcot* accent of the *Tamil* language. To anybody who comes to learn music, the doors of her home are always open and she is so endearingly generous in passing on her hard earned treasure of this great art form. Her teaching capabilities are only too well known. She has the art of initiating with ease, even a complex *sangati*, to her students, be it anybody, even from China or Japan!!

Above everything, it is her abundant and unconditional affection for everyone that makes Pattamma very special. She has utmost concern for the welfare of her dear ones. Wishing always for the best of things, Pattamma, braving her age and health with her tremendous will power, still goes out of the way many a time to fulfil a task if that is highly rewarding. Be it arranging a concert for a deserving youngster or recommending a bright student for a scholarship or fetching an admission for a tiny tot into kindergarten at a prestigious school or even offering matrimonial counsel (in fact she categorically rejected an alliance because of the fact that she once saw the girl wearing a sleeveless blouse-sacrilege, in her opinion!!!!), Pattamma always takes wholehearted care to see that the outcome is always fruitful. True to her name, her silken charisma shines today as a bright beacon to the fraternity of Carnatic music.

When Pattamma holds a trivial gift of a pack of 'Pringles' or a strand of jade or a swirl of violet silk close to her heart, the spirit of the unblemished childlike innocence touches the heart and inspires the soul. And as I listen to the long list of blessings that she voices, every time I fall at her feet and as she holds my hand for a while when I am just about to leave, an inexplicable feeling of bliss pervades, never to be forgotten.

R.K. Shriramkumar is an eminent carnatic musician and has performed several concerts and lecture/demonstrations around the world including several times for Sruti.

Originally written in 2007 for Sruti, India's premier monthly for the performing arts and reproduced with their kind permission. This article is also featured at www.dkpattammal.org and in www.rkshriramkumar.org

Divine Musical Evening with Aishwarya Vidhya Raghunath

by Lata Suresh



Aishwarya Vidhya Raghunath's concert set the stage for another successful year of music and dance for Sruti. Her main concert during the Thyagaraja Aradhana stood out for its musical purity and classicism. Aishwarya began the concert with a scintillating "Tulasi dhala" in MAYamAlavagaulai. The neraval and swaram for "sarasiruha punnAgA" were apt and crisp. It was a beautiful prelude to a divine musical afternoon that was to unfold.

Next, Aishwarya explored the rAgA MukhAri which emanated its bright and subtle shades. The kriti, kArubAru sEyuvAru galarE was pristine and the kalpanA swaram was exotic with fitting patterns that brought out the essence of the rAgA. Nijamarmamulanu in UmAbaranam and SarasAmadhAna in Kapinarayanee that were embedded between the main numbers were impressive. The center-piece for the afternoon was a classy SankarAbaranam essay.



L to R: KVS Vinay, Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath, Mallika Dinakar, Delhi Sairam

The subsequent rendition of Manasu swAdeenamai, created a lasting impression. She ultimately brought the curtain down with a beautiful Emani Veginthune in Huseni and TavathA sOham in PunnAgavarAli. K.V.S. Vinay on the violin provided adequate support and Delhi Sairam on the mridangam played exceptionally well. Sairam played intuitively, resonating well with Aishwarya's singing.

I believe, all of us who were in the auditorium would agree that we are eagerly looking forward to Aishwarya's return to Sruti for a full-featured concert in the near future.

Lata Suresh is a popular carnatic music teacher and has been a consistent Sruti sponsor and supporter. She lives with her family at Newtown Square.

Memorable start to the Spring Season with RKM

by Revathi Subramony



Sruti's Spring 2018 season kicked off with a fabulous concert on April 14th by Ramakrishnan Murthy, accompanied by Charumathi Raghuraman on the violin and Manoj Siva on the mridangam.

Ram started his concert with a brisk rendition of the Kalyani Ata tala varnam, followed by Saint Thyagaraja's composition Maampala Velasika in Asaveri. This krithi has three sahitya intensive charanams which Ram delivered with perfect diction. He embellished this krithi with kalpanaswarams cleverly ending in S P to connect with the Pallavi line, Mampala Velasika.

Ram then went on to present a detailed Narayanagowlai ragam (janyam of Harikamboji with Arohana Avarohana (SR2M1PN2D2N2S/ SN2D2PM1G3R2G3S). Interestingly, the Arohana and Avarohana of Kedaragowlai (SR2M1PN2S/SN2D2PM1G3R2S) is very similar to Narayanagowlai. However, Narayanagowlai is distinguished by certain patent phrases like RMPN S, NDP and MGRGR, S which are not used in Kedaragowlai. Also, Gandharam is a strong note in Narayanagowlai while it is a weak note in Kedaragowlai. Ram delineated Narayanagowlai in his alapana very clearly right from the start by singing the characteristic phrase MGRGR,S. He elaborated this majestic raga with all its distinct beautiful glides. Charumathi followed suit by playing a mellifluous ragam. Dikshitar's classic composition Sri Ramam Ravikulapti Somam was presented and rounded off with creative kalpanaswarams. Manoj Siva's sensitive mridangam accompaniment made it all the more enjoyable. A short but bhavam-filled Saveri alapana followed and Muruga Muruga was rendered at a slow pace.



L to R: Manoj Siva, Ramakrishnan Murthy, Mallika Dinakar, Charumathi Raghuraman

The main piece for the evening was Muthuswami Dikshitar's Balagopala in Bhairavi. Ram's Bhairavi alapana was excellent and stood out for its classical purity, azhutham and sowkhyam. Charu played a fantastic Bhairavi with all the

classic phrases to bring out the beauty of this quintessential ragam. Her perfect silk-smooth bowing made for a very satisfying and aesthetically pleasing Bhairavi. It was refreshing to hear Nereval in the line “Vainika gayaka guruguha nuta pura vairi vihita gopika manohara” instead of the usual Anupallavi line “Neela Neerada Sharira”. The kalpanaswarams culminated in a koraippu alternating between lower and higher rishabam, making for a lively exchange between Ram and Charu. Manoj Siva’s crisp and energetic thani was the perfect ending to this piece.

Ram followed his Bhairavi with Entha cheluvage, a lilting Purandaradasa krithi in Abheri, and Edayya gathi in Chalanattai, a soulful Koteeshwara Iyer composition.

The highlight of the concert was the three raga RTP in Nattaikurunji, Nattai and Kuranji. Ram started off with a glorious Nattaikurunji alapana, and cleverly used the R2G3M1 phrase of Nattaikurunji to transition to R3G3M1 of Nattai—a seamless transition! After demonstrating his strong manodharmam in Nattai, he switched back to Nattaikurunji and again used the R2G3M1 phrase of Nattaikurunji to transition to Kuranji this time. (The phrase is common to both ragams.) While Nattaikurunji is a janyam of Harikamboji, Kuranji is a janyam of Shankarabaranam and Ram was quick to bring out Kuranji by using Kakali nishada as an ending note. Charu was very sharp to catch on instantly to all of this and played all these ragas flawlessly. Similarly Thanam was sung in all the three ragas. The Pallavi “Nattai Kuranji Enbar Siranda Engalada” was set to Vilamba Adi Talam (Chatushra gathi). After embellishing this with Kalpanaswarams, Ram concluded the RTP with a catchy korvai made up of phrases in Kuranji, Nattai and Nattaikurunji—a brilliant RTP indeed!

The concluding pieces were Eppo varuvaro and a Pasuram (Ragamalika) by Thirumangai Azhvar exquisitely tuned by Ram’s guru Sri. R.K.Shriramkumar.

Ramakrishnan Murthy’s first performance for Sruti was for Thyagaraja Aradhana in 2013. Ram’s musical growth since then has been phenomenal and he has developed his own unique style while tapping into the richness and pure classicism of the old stalwarts of Carnatic music. Charumathi’s violin accompaniment was of a high order in terms of aesthetics and proportion, true to her legendary guru Prof. T.N. Krishnan. Manoj Siva’s sensitive mridangam accompaniment brought the perfect balance to this musical evening.

Revathi Subramony, in addition to her full-time job, teaches carnatic music and volunteers as a Director of Sruti Board

Dance Transforms: Vivartana

by Arathi Narayan



Sruti brought the magic of the renowned danseuse, Rama Vaidyanathan to the Philadelphia area as part of the 2018 spring events. Rama Vaidyanathan is at the forefront of Bharatanatyam dancers around the world due to her creativity, unique style and innovative choreography, which includes presenting traditional repertoires as well as experimenting with more contemporary themes.

The theme of this group production was “Vivartana – Dance Transforms”, which explores how dance transforms the dancer as well as the audience and generates a deeply satisfying and enriching experience for all. The production was presented in five parts. The dancers were Rama Vaidyanathan and her four students, including her daughter, Dakshina Vaidyanathan.

PRATIKRIYA “DANCE RESPONDS”

The first part of the production started with Rama’s younger daughter, Sannidhi Vaidyanathan at the center of the stage playing the mridangam. The dancers entered the stage one after the other, performing different adavus in perfect synchronization to the beats of the mridangam. With no other musical instruments or vocal sounds, the sounds of the mridangam and the footwork of the dancers blended harmoniously to transform the audience and the space into a rhythmic oasis. Gradually, the tempo increased and all the dancers danced in sheer abandon to showcase the joy of movement.



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SAMYOGA “DANCE MERGES”

This piece was a solo by Rama where she seeks the breath when she dances. *Anandha Thandava* – Shiva dances the cosmic dance and makes the whole world dance. Rama beautifully depicted the dance of the deer, water, creeper, bee, peacock, snake, elephant, bird, fish and even a worm. As the dancer dances with pure joy and abandon, she imagines dancing with Shiva and finally merging with him and becoming one. The lyrics for this composition was from the Tamil version from Tirumular’s Tirumandiram.

NIMAGNA “DANCE IMMERSES”

This piece was very creative and unique as it showcased dances to poems in different languages, to create an immersive experience for the audience. The Persian poem by Rumi was presented by one of the dancers which she performed very gracefully. She glided effortlessly on stage and her turns were flawless. She performed the Turkish Sufi Whirling dance, where the dancer abandons one's egos or personal desires, by listening to the music, focusing on God, and spinning one's body in repetitive circles.

Dakshina entered the stage next and performed to the classic Meera Bai bhajan – *Pag Ghungroo Bandh Meera Nachi Re*. Rama danced to a composition from a Kashmiri poem by Lalded. Both these dances had elements of folk in it and were a joy to watch.

Two dancers then performed to a composition by Muthuswamy Dikshitar – *Thyagaraja Palayasuman*, in Raga Gowla. Here the dancers, with very graceful movements, beautifully depicted the procession of Shiva in a palanquin. This dance is enacted in the Tiruvarur temple of Tamil Nadu.

Nimagna concluded when all the dancers joined the procession and danced in great delight.

PRATIBODHANA “DANCE AWAKENS”

This part of the production depicted the Raas Leela, the joyful dance of Krishna and the Gopikas. Rama portrayed the Gujarati poet, Narsinh Mehta, who imagines how this enchanting dance unfolds on the banks of the river Yamuna. The audience was treated to glimpses of scenes from Vrindhavan. It was very unique to see the dancers dancing to Bharatanatyam sollukattus, while depicting the Dandiya and the Garba dances between Krishna and the Gopikas. The dance concludes with depictions of the Gopikas flocking around Krishna.



RASA BHAVA “DANCE EVOKES”

“Yatho hasta, thatho drishti...”, the motto by which all Bharatanatyam dancers have to adhere to, as written in Nandikeswara’s Abhinaya Darpana, was the basis for the finale of this grand production. The Asamyatha Hastas or single hand gestures, were depicted by four of the dancers while Dakshina used the mudra to evoke the rasa, which was a treat to watch. Beautiful formations and fast jathis were the highlight of this piece.

In spite of some technical difficulties, this production was spectacular and was a visual treat for all. Although the overall theme was more abstract than traditional repertoires, the grandeur of nritta elevated the whole performance. It was very impressive to see how well the space was utilized and the dynamic movements on the stage was a visual treat for the audience. The dancers showcased both grace and strength and the high energy was sustained from start to finish. The 'angashudda' from every dancer enhanced the performance. Rama has trained her students extremely well and everyone gave a performance par excellence.

Bharatanatyam Dancer and Dance teacher Arathi Narayan has been a long-time supporter of Sruti and runs the Natyaarathi School of Dance in Exton.

Magical afternoon with Sudha Raghunathan

by Sunandha Krishnagopal



The audience at the Hindu temple of Delaware were treated to a memorable concert by Smt. Sudha Raghunathan ably supported by Kamalakiran Vinjamuri on the violin, Rajna Swaminathan on the mridangam, Soumiya Narayan on the ghatam and Kartik Venkataraman on the kanjira.

The concert began with the artist’s rendition of the popular Navaragamalika varnam which was embellished with a smattering of kalpana swarams at the end in Sriragam. Following this was “Shobillu Saptaswara”, a kriti on Nadopasana or worship through music. Interestingly, this song is set to ragam Jaganmohini which literally translates into “the enchantress of the world”. The artist displayed her prowess through breathtaking niraval in the line “Dhara ruksa maadulalo”. A brisk rendition of the Papanasam Sivan song “Nee irangayenil pugazh” in ragam Atana was next.



L to R: Rajna Swaminathan, Kartik Venkataraman, Sudha Raghunathan, Soumiya Narayan, Kamalakiran Vinjamuri

Then came “Janani ninnuvina” in raga Reeti Gowlai. Smt. Sudha displayed her mastery over the raga with elaborate sangathis and gave the alapana a gradual detailed buildup. The simple yet soulful rendition added to the beauty of the song, entranced the audience, and left them wanting for more. Following this was the Tamil song “Arul Seiya Vendum” in raga Rasika Priya which was then followed by the Purandaradasa song “Rama Rama Rama Rama Yenniro Seetha”. These two songs provided for a refreshing change in tempo and set the mood for the following keertanai.

The main song of the concert was “Etavunara” a prolific composition by Saint Tyagaraja in raga Kalyani. Smt. Sudha Raghunathan showed us why she is considered one of the best in Carnatic music through her scintillating raga alapana, highlighting the finer nuances of this raga. The raga was developed with masterly strokes and the grahabeda to Hindolam and Madhyamavati was a reflection of that. She was superbly supported by Kamala Kiran Vinjamuri on the violin during the alapana. The neravil followed by kalpana swaram on the line “Sri Garudaga” was full of gamaka oriented phrases with the usual laya display. This was followed by Thani by Rajna Swaminathan on the mridangam, Sowmiya Narayan on the ghatam, Kartik Venkataraman on the kanjira. It was an elaborate Thani well appreciated by the audience. Following this was a short brilliant rendition of RTP in the following ragas Nata Bhairavi, Bhairavi, Ahir Bhairavi, Saalaka Bhairavi, and lastly Sindhu Bhairavi. A special mention of the violin by Kamalakiran Vinjamuri for the Tanam component should be made here.



The end of the concert consisted of her popular numbers “Bhagyada Lakshmi Baramma”, “Brahmam Okate”, “Kandalan Mudalai”, and “Bho Shambo” which were delivered in quick succession. All in all, her concert was a truly enjoyable and satisfying experience. Music touches the soul, and her concert was a shining testimony of that. Her rendition, song choices, managed to please each and every section of the audience.

Sunandha Krishnagopal is a singer of music of different genres and resides in Downingtown with her family

Novel medium, classical concert

by Balaji Raghothaman



Prasanna, the versatile guitarist, gave a performance for Sruti at the Ibrahim Theater in Philadelphia on May 19th, 2018. It was a packed audience, consisting of both die-hard Sruti rasikas, Prasanna fans who are familiar with his work, and those who were curious about the unusual mixture of guitar with carnatic music. Prasanna gave each group something to cheer about. He carried on a lively conversation with the audience, both with his music as well as his explanations between pieces. Prasanna stuck to a mostly traditional carnatic selection of numbers. He played in the usual concert style recognizable to most of us, with a weighty middle sandwiched by a brisk beginning and end. He started off with a bilahari alapana followed by the kriti toli janma.



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L to R: Rajna Swaminathan, Guitar Prasanna, Ravi Balasubramaniam

Prasanna also played shanmukhapriya and karaharapriya in a full format with alapanas, coupled with the kritis marivere and chakkaneeraja respectively. It was unfortunate that there were a few noticeable lapses of sruti in the latter raga that marred an otherwise engaging and earnest performance. The crowd-pleaser brahmamokate had very interesting variations that veered into rock-music territory. It was clear throughout the concert that Prasanna was at his best at this experimental edge, while somewhat more circumspect in his elaborations in the pure carnatic domain. He presented a couple of other numbers off the beaten path, including a self-composition at the end. Prasanna was competently supported by Rajna Swaminathan on the mridangam and Ravi Balasubramaniam on the ghatam. Despite their lack of prior experience playing together as a group, they managed to present a collaborative and polished picture.

All told, it was an enjoyable evening and another successful Sruti event that surely helped us propagate our mission to reach a wide variety of audiences.

Balaji Raghothaman was the President of Sruti in 2016 and has been an active board member since 2015.

The True Colors of Varnam

by Shishir Kumar



Varnams are scholarly compositions that elaborate melodies replete with raga bhava. The varnam not only establishes raga ranjaka combinations but also the vishesha sancharas, apurva prayogas, and datu prayogas. The varnam proves to be important for both kalpita and kalpana sangeetham. A student practices the varnam to: help with the artistic, polished and stylish singing of pieces, serve as models for kalpana swaras, strengthens laya, and helps with the rendering of gamakas over long syllables. The varnam consists of two parts: the purvangam and the uthrangam. The purvangam consists of the pallavi, anupallavi, and the mukthayi swaras. The uthrangam consists of the charana and charana swaras. Many of the older varnams have another section called the anubandham. The anubandham is to be sung after all the charana swaras have been completed. The anubandham links the charana back to the either an earlier line or back to the pallavi. Then the varnam is concluded with the pallavi line. In the Viriboni varnam there is an eight line anubandham that today is completely forgotten. There are two kinds of varnams: the tana varnam, and the pada varnam, also referred to as the chauka varnam. The tana varnam is identified by its tana-like rigidity, and its faster speed. Examples of the tana varnam include Eranapai in Thodi ragam, Chalamela in Natakurinji, Viriboni in Bhairavi, and many more.

The pada varnam, or chauka varnam are characterized with by its close resemblance to the Padam. Because of the pada varnam's affinity to the padam, both in point in tempo and theme of the sahitya, these compositions are called pada varnams. A common misconception about the pada varnam is that they are characterized by the sahitya appearing all throughout the composition, namely in the mukthayi swaras, and the charana swaras. This is not true. There are many tana varnams that have sahityam all throughout the composition. For example the Vanajakshi varnam in Sahana composed by Subbarama Dikshitar is a tana varnam in ata thalam has sahityam all throughout the composition. This is just one example from many.

Today in the modern concert, the varnam is sung in the beginning of a concert. While for many purposes the varnam serves as a great 'warm-up' for the voice, many people seem to forget the immense scope the varnam has to offer. Many charanas of varnams serve to be amazing spots for improvisation. Varnams are completely filled with raga bhava, which will yield excellent scope for alapana. One does not have to sing a varnam as a main-piece in a concert but one must rid themselves of the stigma attached to the varnam, as the concert commencer.

The biggest problem facing the varnam in today's modern concert is the fact that many varnams are losing many of their components. The Bhairavi ata thalam tana varnam, Viriboni, is one of the many. The magnum opus of Pachimiriyam Adi Appayya, this varnam is taught to all, and one of the most difficult varnams to master. Unfortunately, today a lot of the beauty has been forgotten. Today the varnam is sung as: pallavi, anupallavi, mukthayi swaram, charana, and three charana swaras. Two beautiful aspects of this varnam are missing. Fortunately, many publications have shown how compositions have changed over time. Sangeetha Sampradaya Pradarshini, written by Subbarama Dikshitar and published in 1904, shows the Viriboni in a different way. The varnam seems the same until the charana swaras. The publication shows the varnam with four charana swaras. This third swara is not sung today. The varnas lyrics today is sung as: viribONi ninnEkOri marulukonnadirA (pallavi) sarasUDau dakshiNa dvAraka sAml sri rAjagOpAla dEva (anupallavi) cirunavu mOmuna (charana).

There is more to this varnam. The anubandham which links the charana back to the line sri rAjagOpAla dEva is not sung anymore. The anubandham goes: cirunavvu mOmuna cirucemaTalUragA garimamlraga tEjinekki gamakimpuSUrAgA A neravai garinimlri nelatananneMtO vEDelurA marukELidAni nElukO sAml sri rAjagOpAla dEva. This anubandham shows a great deal of importance to janta prayogas, and shows even more of the raga. With more and more older sources being found and more sources being published, maybe more to the varnam can be found.

Shishir Kumar is a young carnatic saxophone artist from New Jersey who performs across North America and in India. He is a registered "B" grade artist at All India Radio.

Report of Sruti's UK Study Trip funded by Pew Center

by Shankar Muthuswami and Balaji Raghothaman



This year, Sruti was provided a unique opportunity to perform a capacity building exercise, thanks to the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage. It involved a curated visit to the UK to explore the current status of South Asian performing arts and organizations promoting the same. The tour was skillfully put together by Simon Dove, a well-known British performance art expert with deep ties to the South Asian arts scene. We - Shankar Muthuswami, President Elect and Balaji Raghothaman, Director of Resources & Development - traveled on this exploratory exercise, along with Darielle Mason, the curator of the South Asian exhibit at the

Philadelphia Museum of Art.

We had a packed schedule over four days, visiting museum visits, meeting with prominent personalities, and attending performances, spanning London and Birmingham. Here are some of the people we met with, along with some brief context:

- Richard Blurton, the director of the South Asian collection at the British Museum - He gave us a wonderful 2-hr long personal guided tour of his whole exhibit.
- Eva Martinez, Artistic Programmer at the Sadlers Wells Theater, which started off as a conventional ballet theater, but has now morphed into a powerhouse of different types of programming, including the Darbar Indian classical music festival.
- Shri Shriram, multi-faceted musician, convenor of Croydon Composers, a community music coalition. Shri started with classical violin and table, but now plays a versatile self-constructed bass guitar. He performs a whole range of genres, from jazz and hip-hop to classical/fusion. His Croydon composers effort was an eye-opener for us in terms of bringing together a diverse community with a high quality outcome.
- Dharambir Singh, sitar exponent and pioneer in Indian music education in the UK
- Piali Ray, director of Sampad, a 30 year-old organization which aims to connect the South Asian community and the UK mainstream through art.
- Shobana Jeyasingh, a famous dance choreographer who originally trained in the Vazhuvur style of Bharatanatyam, and now creates pieces in classical as well as contemporary styles.
- The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in London, which serves as the premier Indian cultural organization in the UK
- Mira Kaushik, director of Akademi, an organization that operates out of the Southbank Center, a prime multi-arts venue in central London, and connects South Asian dance with the wider contemporary arts scene

We had very in-depth conversations (I counted at least 10 hours) on a wide-ranging list of topics. Some of the issues discussed include the role of professionally run vs. volunteer-driven arts organizations, the role of the traditional institutions such as Bhavan compared to the 'cutting edge' ones like the Akademi, performing as highly trained amateur artists vs. performing as professionals, the relatively higher percentage of governmental funding in the UK vs. private funding in the USA, and how that steers the conversation in arts.

It was a truly memorable trip for us, giving us a lot of food for thought, as well as the opportunity to meet some truly wonderful people committed to the South Asian arts. We hope to funnel our learnings to the Sruti Board and to the patron community and find ways forward for the betterment of Sruti. We sincerely thank the Pew Center for commissioning this exercise, and special thanks to Simon Dove for his fantastic stewardship of the trip.

Balaji Raghothaman is Sruti's Director for Resources and development and Shankar Muthuswami is the President-Elect of Sruti for 2018

How I Reconnected with the Music of My Childhood

by Vibha Agrawal



Music is the soul of life, they say. And growing up in New Delhi, India, I was fortunate enough to have access to a lot of music. I grew up learning Hindustani vocal and felt deeply connected to Indian classical music: the melodious sounds of sarod, the beats of tabla or mridangam, or the wafting music of the flute. I attended many concerts by masters of classical music: Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Zakir Hussain, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia and many more. I particularly recall having the privilege of hearing Carnatic music legend Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna in concert as a child and listening enthralled to his voice.

That unfortunately changed when I moved to the US. Thirty years ago, it was difficult to find venues where Indian classical music was performed. Opportunities were few and far in between, and as first a student, and then working in a fast-paced corporate public relations role, it was difficult to find the time to attend the few Indian musical events that were nearby.

When I chose to work in the non-profit world five years ago, I joined the Community Music School as Managing Director to be once again close to music. And my love for Indian Classical music once more came to the forefront. I was so excited to learn about SRUTI and connected with the Board to explore opportunities to bring classical music to CMS. With the Indian community growing in the area, and non-Indians with a growing interest in World Music, it was good timing to bring Carnatic voice and instrumental music to our area.

Over the course of two years, we were fortunate to host many SRUTI artists and events at CMS. Every concert was unique and wonderful. Whether it was the Carnatic Vocal concert by Dr Padma Sugavanam, Carnatic Vocal Concert by Sandeep Narayan or the Carnatic vocal concert performed by Ashwath Narayanan, each vocalist brought his or her own distinctive style to the genre. The accompanying musicians were equally accomplished, and audiences enjoyed the wonderful sounds of violin, mridangam and ghatam as they supported these beautiful voices.

The most recent concert Mellifluous Musings: A Unique Violin Viola Duet by Vittal Ramamurthy and V.V.S. Murari, was truly impressive. This concert brought together two legendary styles (Lalgudi & VVS) of Indian Classical Violin Artistry on a single stage. Once again, the accompanying musicians were world-class as well: Srimushnam Raja Rao on Mridangam and K.V. Gopalakrishnan on Kanjira. Audiences were immersed in the music as the artists performed wonderful duets of increasing complexity.

SRUTI concerts at CMS have attracted a diverse audience- both Indian and American- and audiences have universally left the concerts amazed by the improvisational style of Indian classical music. Music teachers have commented on the fact that these musicians perform long and complex pieces in unison with other musicians without any sheet music! It has been wonderful to expose new audiences to music that I have loved since my childhood. I must thank Raji for connecting me to SRUTI, and both Nari and Srikanth for being open to partnering with me. Even though I am no longer with CMS, I look forward to attending many more wonderful SRUTI concerts and continuing to support these remarkable musicians.

Vibha Agrawal was Managing Director of Community Music School with whom Sruti partnered with to present several concerts during 2017 and 2018

An Emerging Veena Star – Ramana Balachandhran

by Rajee Padmanabhan



Sergei Rachmaninoff, the Russian pianist and composer, famously said, “Music is enough for a lifetime, but a lifetime is not enough for music.” If a rasika is fortunate enough, she gets to witness an artist with such precocious artistry that he seems to have compressed many lifetimes of music into his young musical life. Ramana Balachandran is one such artist. Ramana’s marvelous concert on the Veena, accompanied by Sumesh Narayanan on Mridamgam and Anirudh Athreya on Khanjira was a shining example of the incredible dynamism and promise of the new generation of artists coming up in the world of Carnatic Music.

Ramana is a Gayika Vainika. A brisk Taamadam Tagadaiyya in Mohanakalyani started off the concert. Ramana’s resonant voice accompanies and accentuates his Veena, giving the added color of the lyrics in those moments. Right off the bat, it was clear that co-artists on stage shared great chemistry, with Sumesh and Anirudh playing with great anticipation. Devagandhari Ragam’s distinct contours were played by Ramana with great bhavam in the Gopalakrishna Bharathi krithi Enneramum Undan Sannidhiyile.



L-R: Sumesh Narayanan, Ramana Balachandhran, Anirudh Athreya

The effervescent Mandari krithi Ninnujeppa Karanamemi Manasa was taken up with a round of fast swarams. Ramana’s keen grasp of layam aspects lends itself in the intricate and apt patterns in the kalpana swaraprasthara.

Kharaharapriya Ragam was taken up for elaboration. Ramana explored the depths of this melakarta raga, developed it beautifully around the characteristic phrases. Ramana’s approach to alapana is unhurried and the gradual unfurling of the raga in all its possibilities. Thyagaraja’s classic, Pakkala Nilabadi was rendered with both slow and fast swarams at the charanam line “Manasuna dalaci”. The kalpana swarams ended fittingly in the “N S R, R,” pattern of “Manasuna”. Swaraprasthara with multiple nadais included a back and forth with mridangam and kanjira kept the audience enraptured. Sumesh and Anirudh’s Tani Avaratanam in Misra Chappu was full of exciting patterns and enthralling.

A Ragam Tanam Pallavi in Hameerkalyani in Khanda Nadai Tisra Ekam followed.

Ramana Needayarada Arunanatha Karunadatha Ninnarul varaada

There are certain ragas that lend themselves so beautifully to the strums of the Veena strings as if they were specifically created for this instrument alone. Hameer Kalyani is one such in my humble opinion. Ramana played an alapana with such swanubhavam (inadequately translated as “self-enjoyment”). A crisp tanam followed. Here again Ramana singing the trikalam anchored the RTP more for the audience. Excellent round of swarams in Nattai, Madhuvanti, and Shyama added luster to the RTP.

The lilting Chenchurutti of Navaneethachora Devaki Vasudeva Nandana must have indeed be sweet music for Ramana's mother, who was in attendance. Arunachala Siva, a tribute to the lord of Tiruvannamalai concluded this memorable performance.

Ramana's Veena technique can be termed "Gayaki" style, with emphasis on the nuances of vocalized music. Ramana's approach is steeped in gamaka oriented music. Even for the brigas, Ramana seemed to eschew split fingering in favor of producing them on a single fret. Ramana is innovative in the true sense of the word – he pushes the creative boundaries, while staying true to the idioms of the music; his alapanas are refreshingly free flowing; he is clearly charting new waters with his swara prastharas, trying out new patterns and poruttams (fitted patterns); his choices of krithis show his keen aesthetics.

Rajee Padmanabhan has been a long-term supporter of Sruti and is deeply knowledgeable about carnatic music

An Enjoyable Evening with Rithvik Raja

by Dinakar Subramanian



It was a pleasant afternoon at the Tohickon middle school in Montgomery County where we all eagerly awaited Rithvik Raja's concert for Sruti. The first thing that struck the audience was the configuration of the artists on stage. Instead of the usual vocalist in the middle, the violinist and the mridangist facing each other sitting perpendicular to the main artist, we had a semi-circular arrangement of the artists as if they were a bunch of friends ready to entertain. Rithvik is clearly taking a page from his guru T. M. Krishna in this regard. On stage with him were Rajeev Mukundan on the violin, Praveen Sparsh on the mridangam and Anirudh Atreya on the kanjira.

The concert started with the Thyagaraja vibhakti kriti in Gowlai - tyAgarAja pAlayAsu mAm - which lent a calm start to the concert. Rithvik embellished the kriti with kalpanaswarams at the samashtri charanam line - sri guruguha pUjita. For the rasika, it was obvious after this kriti that the four of them were out to deliver a solid performance while having fun in the process.



L-R: Parveen Sparsh, Rithvik Raja, Rajeev Mukundan, Anirudh Athreya

After a quick alapana in Kamboji, Rithvik sang the eternal favorite mA jAnakI of Thyagaraja. The joint output from both Rithvik and Rajeev was nothing short of pure enjoyment for the audience. The Kamboji was half an hour of good music with the kalpanaswarams giving us flashes of Madurai Mani Iyer's scintillating swarams from yesteryear.

A very mellow alapana in Anandabhairavi followed with an unusual start to the classic piece by Shyama Sastry - O jagadamba nannu. Rithvik started the kriti at the anu pallavi - I jagati. A very melodious neraval at varasita giri (the

svara sAhityam) right after the first caranam sustained the calming kriti. I do wish that he sang all the caranams to showcase the grandeur of this masterpiece.

Swathi Tirunal's bOgIndra sAyinam in Kuntalavarali added a brisk phase to the concert after the Anandabhairavi and Rithvik presented a nice variation of the kriti where he sang the caranam in a vilamba kalam before singing it in the durita kalam.

An elaborate raga alapana in Purvikalyani that transitioned into Khamas, then Bhairavi and Neelambari gave an indication that a unique RTP was in store. The ragam and tanam portion were a treat with Rajiv adding his creativity to make it a very pleasant experience.

Rithvik then launched into a unique chatur-raga pallavi with the pallavi - paarthadhum manam mayanginaen paavayai (பார்த்ததும் மனம் மயங்கினேன் பாவுையை) (I got infatuated the moment I had a first glimpse of the damsel) with two more variations - paarthadhum manam mayanginaen pillayai (பார்த்ததும் மனம் மயங்கினேன் பிள்ளையை) (I felt filial love the moment I had a first glimpse of the child); paarthadhum manam mayanginanen annayai (பார்த்ததும் மனம் மயங்கினேன் அன்னையை) (I felt parental love the moment I had a first glimpse my mother). The last word of the pallavi gave rise to different emotions and Rithvik conveyed that very poignantly using Neelambari when singing the pallavi with the love for the child. Praveen and Anirudh executed a fine tani between the two of them to wrap a very cleverly conceived and delivered pallavi.

sAramaina mAtalentO cAlu cAlu rA, a lilting javali by Swati Tirunal in bEhAg was rendered beautifully notified us that the tukkadas have started. karpagamE kaDaikkaN pArAi - Papanasam Sivan's composition in Madhyamavati on the deity in Myslapore followed and the concert concluded with the mangaLam in saurashtram.

A very enjoyable concert with a terrific rapport between the artists all of which provided a synergistic performance.

Dinakar Subramanian is an ex-President of Sruti and is part of the current Sruti Board of Directors. He has been teaching and performing carnatic music over many years.

Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar - The Royal Composer

by Dr.T.S. Sathyavathi



The 19th and 20th century saw several outstanding music composers patronized by the rulers of Wodeyar dynasty in the state of Mysore who made significant contribution to the classical system of music of the south by enriching the treasure of musical composition. Chief among them are Sadashiva Rao, Muttiah Bhagavata, Veene Sheshanna, Vasudevacharya and JayaChamarajendra Wodeyar (JCW).

A special mention must be made of the multi-faceted personality of JCW whose extraordinary potential found its expression and consummation in making him an able administrator, diligent diplomat, spirited sportsman, class-composer, philosopher, devotee, scholar, author and with all this a humble human. Sri Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar was the last scion of Mysore Wodeyar dynasty par excellence in every field he explored. He was a great soul, having an abiding faith in goodness and humanity.

Born on 18th July 1919 to Yuvaraja Kanteerva Narasimharaja Wodeyar and Kempu Cheluvajjammani, he succeeded the throne after his uncle Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar in 1940. He was married to Princess Sathya Prema Kumari in 1938 and Tripurasundarammani in 1942.

His early education was at the royal school and was later admitted to Mysore Maharaja's college where he did BA degree examinations with History, politics and economics securing 5 gold medals. He also studied Kannada, English and Sanskrit to professional levels.

Passion for music



Apart from excellent academic qualification JCW had keen interest for music. He learnt Western music in piano from Sister Ignatius. He took up the examinations conducted by Trinity college London and received high honors. Western music became his passion and he developed a library of Western Classical music and records which is considered as one of the largest and best in India. He helped the Western world discover the music of a little-known Russian composer Nikolai Karlovich Medtner (1880-1951), financing the recording of a large number of his compositions and founding the Medtner Society in 1949. Medtner's third piano concerto is dedicated to the Maharaja of Mysore. He became a Licentiate of the Guild hall of Music, London and honorary fellow of Trinity College of Music, London, in 1945.

After ascending the throne on 8th Sept 1940, he was initiated to the Karnatak Classical Music as a natural sequence to the cultural vibrancy that prevailed in Mysore court till then. He learnt to play veena under Vid. Venkatagiriappa and mastered the nuances of Karnatak music under the tutelage of veteran composer and Asthana Vidwan Sri. Vasudevacharya. He was also initiated into the secrets of 'SRIVIDYA' as an upasaka (under assumed name chitprabhananda) by his guru Shilpi Siddalingaswamy. This inspired him to

compose as a near hundred compositions with the 'Srividya' as the mudra (pen name).

Patron supreme

Many noted Indian musicians received patronage at his court, including Mysore Vasudevacharya, Venna Venkata Giriappa, B Devendrappa, V Doraiswamy Iyengar, T Chowdiah, Tiger Varadachar, Chennakeshaviah, Titte Krishna Iyengar, S N Mariappa, Chintalapalli Ramachandra Rao, R N Doraiswamy, H. M. Vaidyalinga Bhagavata. The music of Mysore won global acclaim with the smoldering aroma of Karnatak music spreading far and wide.

Compositions of Sri Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar

Greatly inspired by Muthuswamy Dikshitar, JCW has used rare ragas and talas. In the usage of suladi talas such as Khanda tripata, Mushra Jhampe, Chaturashra Matya he has closely followed the footsteps of Dikshitar. The rare ragas and talas are employed with such ease and aptness that it makes one wonder at the brilliant spontaneity and imagination of the composer. Rendering JCW's compositions pose a challenge to the musicians and when presented properly it gives immense satisfaction to both the artist and the listeners. Even when a simple raga like Gambheera Nata is used as in the kriti "SriJalandara" set to Adi tala, the composition is so magnificent in structure and content that only a seasoned artist with great breadth control would present it with its due dignity and grace.

His compositions have a unique structure with multiple charanas, swara embellishments, raga mudras, madhyamakala sahitya etc. His very first composition in attana "Sri Maha ganapatim" is a refreshing change considering its structure with multiple charanas, madhyamakala shityam and chitteswaram.

In his composition in Vasanta "Kamakshim Varalakshmi" set to rupaka tala, after the pallavi and anu pallavi, the charanam "Ekamranateshwara priya vinodinam" is followed by 3 madhyamakala subcharanas. After each subordinate charanam in madhyama kala the charanam "Ekamranatheshwara priya vinodinik" is sung. A similar structure is followed in his Charukeshi kriti set to Khanda tripata "Swaminatha palayamam".

His compositions have beautifully woven raga mudras in the sahitya.

Examples:

- Purandaradi sanuta gambheeranatya pradarshaka nagalingam
- gowri manohari pahi kumara
- Umam namami hemavatim bhagavatim
- parabrahma gamanashrama hitakarini
- brahmada valaye maye

- Pavitra baalachandrikaa modinim manonmanim

His knowledge of western classical music has given him an edge over other composers of his time in retaining the essential character of the note (suddha swara) and also exploiting them to the fullest advantage of the raga with the judicious usage of gamakas.

Unique features of his compositions

Has composed all his kritis in Sanskrit. Sound knowledge of this divine language has given them a rare dignity of diction. The lyrics or text of his compositions are in praise of Hindu deities and do not address social issues or reforms.

All the compositions are in different ragas without repetitions. He has composed kritis in rare ragas like Bhogavasantham, Durvanki, Nagadhwani, Nadabrahma etc. and used uncommon talas like Khanda tripata, Mishra Jhampe and chaturashra matya.

His compositions follow a majestic gait of what can be noticed as neither vilamba (slow) nor druta (fast).

His compositions have a unique structure with multiple charanas, chitteswaras, swaraksharas, raga mudras, madhyamakala sahitya etc.

Sri Jayachamarajendra wodeyar led a wholesome life setting an example to the society. He died on 23rd August 1974 leaving behind a rich legacy to cherish and benefit.

Supplement:

- Literary works of JCW
- The quest for peace: an Indian approach. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 1959
- Dattatreya: The way & the goal, Allen & Unwin, London 1957
- The gita & Indian culture, Orient Longmans, Bombay, 1963
- Religion and man, Orient Longmans, Bombay, 1965. Based on prof. Ranade series lectures instituted at Karnataka University in 1961
- Avadhuta: Reason & reverence, Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore 1958
- An aspect of Indian aesthetics, University of Madras 1956
- Puranas as the vehicles of India's philosophy of history, Journal purania, issue #5, 1963
- Advaita philosophy, Sringeri souvenir volume, 1965, pages 62 – 64
- Sri Sureshwaracharya, Sringeri Souvenir Volume, Srirangam, 1970, pages 1-8
- Kundalini yoga, A review of "Serpent Power" by Sir John Woodroff
- Note on ecological surveys to precede large irrigation projects – Wesley press, Mysore 1955
- African Survey-Bangalore press, 1955
- The virtuous way of Life – Mountain path journal - July 1964 edition

He also sponsored the translation of many classics from Sanskrit to Kannada as part of the Jayachamaraja Grantha Ratna Mala, including 35 parts of the rigveda. These are essentially ancient sacred scriptures in Sanskrit till then not available in Kannada language comprehensively. All the books contain original text in Kannada accompanied by Kannada translation in simple language for the benefit of common man. As late H Gangadhara Shastri – Asthan (court) astrologer and Dharmadhikaari of Mysore Palace – who himself has contributed substantially in the above works – has stated that Maharaja used to study each and every one of these works and discuss with them with the authors.

Able administrator

Having led the state of Mysore to its complete honors for a period though short in the scale of time JCW's achievements as an inspiring model were not to ignore. He continued his artless service to the nation in various capacities even after



he signed the instrument of accession with the dominion of India on the eve of India attaining independence in August 1947 and the princely state of Mysore got merged with the republic of India on January 26, 1950. He held the position of Raj pramukh of the state of Mysore from 1950 – 1956. After the integration of the neighboring Kannada – majority parts of the states of Madras and Hyderabad, he became the first governor of the recognized unified state of Mysore, 1956 – 64 and later was transferred as the governor of the state of Madras (Tamil Nadu) 1964 – 66.

Spirited Sportsman

He was a good horseman and a tennis player who helped Ramanathan Krishnan to participate at Wimbledon. He was also well known for his marksmanship and was highly sought-after by his subjects whenever a rogue elephant or a man eating tiger attacked their immediate surroundings. He was also responsible for establishing and supporting the wildlife sanctuary at Bandipur.

Honors

- The British government honored him with the GCSI in 1945 and GCB in 1946
- Doctor of Literature from the university of Queensland, Australia [3][4]
- Doctor of Literature from the Annamalai University, Tamilnadu
- Doctor of Law from the Banaras Hindu University
- Doctor of Laws honoris causa from University of Mysore, (1962)
- Fellow and president of Sangeet natak academy, New Delhi, 1966
- First chairman of Indian Wildlife board
- Founder – President of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad

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Dr T.S. Sathyavathi is a highly reputed carnatic music performer and educator

The Nightingale of Andhra Pradesh

by Prithi Rajan



The SRUTI concert season for the Fall of 2018 was inaugurated with a concert by Smt. Dr. Pantula Rama, held at the Agnes Irwin School auditorium in Bryn Mawr, PA. Popularly known as “The Nightingale of Andhra Pradesh”, Dr. Rama is a socially conscious artiste, in addition to being an author and sought after performer in India and abroad. On this warm afternoon which seemed more a continuation of summer than the harbinger of autumn, she performed with Sri. MSN Murthy on violin who is himself an accomplished composer and performer, and Sri. Kotipalli Ramesh on mridangam.



Her concert commenced with hecharigakA rA, a Thyagaraja kriti in rAgam yedukulakAmboji, welcoming the Lord Rama. The audience was then treated to a relatively detailed rendition of three ragas in succession: usEni (eppadi manam), hindOlam (govardana gIrisham) and hEmavati (sri kAntimathim), which created an unusual depth in the performance. My personal favorite was sri kAntimathim,

Muthuswami Dikshitar's composition praising the Goddess, which was rendered with a relaxed elegance and engendered an abundance of bhakti bhava.

The absolute highlight of the concert was the Ragam Thanam Pallavi in Bilahari, which is composed by Sri. MSN Murthy, and Dr. Rama's detailed rendering brought out the beauty and pathos of the ragam. The composition harI srIharI ahobilaharI was rendered in a stimulating Khanda triputa talam, and ably accompanied by the composer on the violin with equally melodious matching violin compositions. The virtuosity of the artists was showcased in a ragamAlika at the end which included malaharI and srirAgam, along with the tanI-Avarthanam.

The penultimate jAvalli by Shri pattAbhirAmayya in rAgam paras was cheli nEnEtlu in which a nAyika confesses to her sakhi about her truant beloved. This composition lends itself well to being rendered in Bharatanatyam, but Dr. Rama brought out the nAyika's pathos with her voice as well as a dancer. In response to audience request she continued with a thillAna in paras, again rendering rhythmic dance-worthy phrases with aplomb. The excellence continued up until the end of the Mangalam, bhavamAna composed by Thyagaraja in rAgam sowrAshtram, which she sang at length in its unhurried entirety, bringing the audience to their feet.

Prithi Rajan enjoys classical music and dance, and has supported SRUTI for the past several years.

Violin Viola Vittal and VVS – The “V” Quartet – Voila!

by Pitchumani Sivakumar



In keeping with its penchant for quality programming, Sruti showcased yet another fantastic instrumental fusion concert featuring Sri Vittal Ramamurthy and Sri VVS Murari on the Violin and Viola respectively. They were accompanied by Sri Srimushnam Raja Rao on the Mridangam and Sri K.V.Gopalakrishnan on the Kanjira. The program was a seamless merger of two pre-eminent schools of Carnatic Violin – the “Lalgudi” school and the “VVS” school. The harmonic Viola, by virtue of its lower range, was tuned to an octave lower than that of the Violin, creating a pleasurable musical experience.

The concert started with the sAveri varnam, SarasUda, which was rendered in three brilliant speeds. BrOva bArama followed suit punctuated with some brisk fast speed swarams that oozed the essence of BahudAri. With NavarAthri around the bend, it was befitting that the duo decided to invoke the blessings of the Divine Mother with three stunning Devi kritihis. First, VVS Murari presented an exquisite AlApana of varAli on the Viola. The sedate viLamba kAla rendition of “mAmava meenakshi” in Misra chAppu handsomely brought out the yogic description of the goddess of Madurai by Deekshithar. Next came Harikesanallur's Durga Devi in Navarasa kAnadA with its hallmark chittaswarams. The stand-out number that made this rasika's day was however the mesmerizing “Akhilandeswari” in DvijAvanti, another masterpiece of Deekshithar. There was a delectable swaram exchange on the dvijAvanti piece that effectively portrayed the mastery of the two accomplished violi(ni)sts on the dais. The loosener was “Sobillu”(JaganmOhini, rUpakam) that was rendered in breathtaking speed. Sri Raja Rao and KVG provided the expected embellishment with astounding anticipation, theermAnams and eduppus (especially on the cAranam line, dhara rig sAmA...)



L-R: Srimushnam Raja Rao, Vittal Ramamoorthy, VVS Murari, K.V.Gopalakrishnan

The main piece of the evening was Sri ThyAgarAjA's Chakkani RAja in Kharaharapriya which was pure delight starting from the rAgA exposition leading to the neraval, swaram and tani. With Sri Raja Rao at the stage, one has learnt to expect the unexpected and the resounding thani was a testament to the rich legacy of this reputed accompanist. KVG was also in his zone pumped up by the senior percussionist and matched Sri Raja Rao sollu for sollu. Much of the audience kept raving about the "thani" and unanimously chose to call it "fireworks" – early deepavali?

Unlike rAgam-thAnam-pallavls (RTPs) of recent times that have become a burdensome mathematical exercise, Vittal and VVS enthralled the audience with a simple, subtle and impactful Adi thAlam RTP in MOhanam – Kannanai ManiVannanai – eduppu at the last veechu. The rAgamAlika swarams were rendered in Ananda Bhairavi, KayAni, KalyAnavasantham and Sindhu Bhairavi.

JagadOdAranA in kApi (Sri Purandaradasa) was rendered soothingly and melodiously in two speeds. Honestly, any tillAnA of Lalgudi sir would have been a treat – I was so much looking forward to Madhuvanti or dEsh but it looked like the request for "MohanakalyAni" was made and honored ahead of time and provided an absolutely fantastic end to a great concert – a concert rooted in tradition, soaked in bhava that left the listeners spellbound. Congrats Sruti for putting together this excellent concert!

Dr.Pitchumani Sivakumar is a Mridangam artist, teacher and ardent classical music enthusiast residing in Philadelphia. A Scientist by profession, he leads drug discovery efforts at Bristol-Myers Squibb.

Pleasing Performance by Rumya Venkateswaran

by Priyanka Dinakar



It gives me great pleasure to write this review for the Bala Bhavam concert of Rumya Venkateswaran, both a peer and a friend. She was accompanied on mridangam by Srihari Raman and on the violin by Vishal Sowmyan. I would be remiss if I did not mention her delivery of the Charukeshi varnam, a composition of the late Padma Bhushan Shri Lalgudi G. Jayaraman, during the sound check. Her delivery of the varnam made me instantly halt the conversation that I was in to take in the lovely melakarta ragam's essence.

As much as I had wished that the varnam was a part of the concert, I loved the choice of starting the concert with a bright Manavyālakinchara in the ragam Nalinakanti. Rumya started it with a short alapana to show the range of the ragam, and the music filled the space of the hall exceedingly well. The piece culminated in a few quick rounds of kalpanaswarams, with fast exchanges between Rumya and Vishal. I would like to commend Vishal on his swaram exchanges with Rumya, as the dynamic between the two of them started off the

concert briskly. Since it was the first piece of the concert, there were still some sound adjustments that needed to be made, and a thought occurred to me in response to that: Is it truly a Bala Bhavam concert if 5 parents are not trying to get the attention of the person monitoring the sound system to increase the vocalist's volume?

But I digress; the pace of the concert shifted to a slightly slower tempo with Rumya singing Ekambranatham Bhajeham by Muthuswami Dikshitar in the ragam Gamakakriya, also known as Purvikalyani. For historical context, Dikshitar lived in Kanchi for a brief period of time, and composed this kriti on Ekambreshwara. Similar to her Nalinakanti alapana, Rumya used her Gamakakriya alapana to show the range of the ragam, from the mandra sthayi to the tara sthayi. To alter the pace of the concert, this composition was sung at a slower tempo from Manavyāla.



The next piece was Ramachandram Bhavayami in Vasanta, the second kriti of Muthuswami Dikshitar's Rama Vibhakti kritis. In the past I have heard this song sung by T.M. Krishna at ati vilamba kalam, at a pace almost rivaling a padam. However the kriti is usually delivered at a faster speed, which Rumya adhered to in order to pick up the pace after a slower Ekambranatham. A bright Shankarabharanam alapana followed, with ample emphasis and focus placed on the 'ga,' one of the highlight notes of the ragam. It was apt that Rumya presented Mahalakshmi Jaganmāta by Papanasam Sivan at a Mahalakshmi devasthanam. The line of "pārkkadal tarum krpākari" was the line of focus for neraval and kalpanaswaram, and opened up the space for a good exchange of ideas. Vishal was able to elevate the concert by adding his own embellishments throughout it. He made his mark in Mahalakshmi from the

Shankarabharanam alapana, through the neraval and the kalpanaswarams. I look forward to seeing more of him through his own musical journey, as he gets more and more opportunities to perform.

The concert ended with Rumya singing the jāvali in Behag, Sāramaina by Swati Tirunal. This is one of my favorite javalis to listen to, as well as sing, so it was a pleasant and lilting end to the concert. I would like to acknowledge Srihari's fantastic mrdangam playing for this piece, since jāvali-playing can easily sound intrusive, given the gamakas and sangathis, as well as ornamentation that the artist may add to the composition.

Overall, I would like to give a special commendation to Rumya for giving a concert after many years, and to Vishal and Srihari for their very dynamic and supportive accompaniment.

Priyanka Dinakar is a senior at Georgetown University studying Political Economy. She is a student and avid listener of Carnatic music.

My Experiences at the Chennai December Season *by Rasika Sivakumar*



With the blessings of the Almighty and my revered gurus, I had the golden opportunity to visit and perform at the prestigious Chennai December music season 2017. As you may know, Chennai is a great place for classical music and often called the "Mecca of Music". During this time numerous great musicians around the world come to participate in the December music festival.

The weather was very cool and the air was filled with music all the time. It was a very motivating, inspiring, and useful trip and I learnt a lot by listening to concerts of vidwans and vidushis such as Smt. Suguna Varadhachari, Sri Neyveli Santhanagopalan, Sri Vijay Shiva, Sri Sanjay Subramanian, Sri Amritha Murali, Abishek Raghuram, Smt. Gayathri Venkatragavan, Ramakrishnan Murthy and Kruthi Bhat. I was surprised how all the artists had concerts almost daily and still were able to keep their voice and tone perfect and fit. I also learnt how to choose

songs carefully for each concert. I was a little nervous for my first concert but I built confidence as I sailed through my schedule. I was pleased that all the concerts went very well by God's grace, my guru's blessings and the support of many family members, friends and artists that came to my concerts. Other than the concerts, I also enjoyed the early morning margazhi temple festivities and of course the hot Venn Pongal! I enjoyed putting colorful Rangolis along with my loving grandma. The added incentive for going to concerts was the variety of snacks and food at the canteens outside the concert halls.



Drawing of "The Trinity of Carnatic Music" by Rasika Sivakumar

I am very fortunate to be born to great parents that are involved in Carnatic music, who introduced and opened the doors for me to this wonderful art. It was Mahaperiyava's blessings and the motivation of my parents and my gurus that made me participate in the Chennai December music season. I am looking forward to this trip every year and hope to continue to visit and participate in this honored festival in Chennai. I also pay my respects and Namaskarams to the holy musical trinity and other composers for the precious jewels they have composed and offered to God with utmost devotion and dedication.

Rasika Sivakumar is a fifth grader undergoing advanced training in classical music from Smt. Rajarajeshwari Bhat and Sri Neyveli Santhanagopalan. She has performed concerts at various venues in USA and India and won prizes in several music competitions.

A Masterly Trifecta: Lecture-Concert-Workshop by Dr. Sathyavathi by Kamakshi Mallikarjun

Mastery in the world of arts is exceptional. Even rarer, a very accomplished performing musician who is also a great teacher. And exponentially rarer, also a musicologist, Sanskrit scholar and laya exponent. Dr T S Sathyavathi's breadth of expertise is indeed dazzling. Even more wonderful is her passion to share her ocean of knowledge with all students and rasikas with such erudition, fluency and warmth.

As described in various interviews, Dr T S Sathyavathi is one of the premier students of the late Sangita Kalanidhi Shri R K Srikantan; she also learnt to play the mridangam and not only studied Sanskrit, but went on to do a PhD with the subject of her thesis being "The contributions of Abhilashitartha Chintamani (Manasollasa) to Indian music".

A very big THANK YOU to Sruti for arranging this eclectic lecture and thematic concert and also a workshop by Dr T S Sathyavathi. This gave us this incredible opportunity to truly learn and gain so many valuable musical, laya and lyrical insights from this great vidushi and guru.

The topic for the lecture on Oct 6th 2018 was on the compositions of Shri Muthuswami Dikshithar. Smt Sathyavathi's repertoire is so versatile and vast, we could have drawn the name of a composer from a hat and she would have been able to do the lec-dem on the spot! Search online and you will see the plethora of lec-dems on the 'Musical Excellence' of so many composers that Dr T S Sathyavathi has given in India – Dikshithar, Shyama Sastri, Thyagaraja, Svati Tirunaal, Muthiah Bhagavathar, Mysore Vasudevacharya, Purandaradasa; not to mention the online Shaale courses on appreciating the compositions of GNB and master class on Mysore composers. Also, further drilldowns into composers such as Handling of Desiya ragas by Dikshithar, [his unique phraseology](#) .

In the workshop conducted here that included a Khamas composition of Mysore Sadashiva Rao, she sang the exquisite swarakshara patterns in his extremely rare Kalyani kriti Pamaruni brova tamasamma in Matya tala; while teaching a kriti of Mysore Vasudevacharya, sang another rare gem – the only composition of Mysore Vasudevacharya in Kannada – Karuniso taye in ragam Sarasvathimanohari. Dr T S Sathyavathi's phenomenal repertoire reminded me of how Richard Feynman touted Hans Bethe's mathematical prowess: "every number was near something he knew."

Lecture – Appreciating the compositions of Shri Muthuswami Dikshithar

As Dr T S Sathyavathi mentions in all her lec-dems, our focus should be to learn about what are the unique characteristics of the composer. It is not about comparison; it is about appreciation and trying to get a better understanding of the musical vision of the composer so that we can pay better respect when we sing or listen to their compositions.

"It is about enjoying the beauty of a fully bloomed flower. We are not here to pluck the petals to see where the fragrance issues from or origin of the color pigment. It is not about analysis; it is trying to go a little closer to the composer and trying to feel what he felt. Awe inspiring is the word when we think of Dikshithar. Compositions as unalterable as the Vedic Hymns. Compositions should linger, haunt you; You keep discovering new insights which is what Dikshithar's compositions do; most are meditative and contemplative. "

Highlights from the lecture on Oct 6th at the Delaware Mahalakshmi Temple with some additional examples from the [online lec-dem](#) on Shaale Live YouTube Channel can be found at [Sruti Smriti Blog](#). (<http://srutipihila.tumblr.com/>)

Additional References

- Meaning and explanation of Sanskrit words from Wikipedia and Sanskrit to English Dictionary
- Lyrics and meaning of Dikshithar songs from Shri T K Govinda Rao's book and <http://www.medieval.org/music/world/carnatic/dikshitar.html>

Thematic Concert

Dr T S Sathyavathi with vocal support by her student Nandita

Violin: Sandhya Anand and Mridangam: Keerthi Venkataramani

Dr T S Sathyavathi's unique holistic format helps us gain a complete picture of the composer; starting with her lec-dem highlighting the salient features, followed by a concert featuring the songs of the same composer. It is like learning a new language by immersion.

What is also striking is her amazing clarity; clear explanation of the meaning and references in the lyrics, perfect diction, clarion musical notes and sangatis, razor sharp precision in the chittaswaras.



L to R: Keerthi Ramani, Nandita, Dr T.S. Sathyavathi, Sandhya Anand

Dr T Sathyavathi shared how she approaches the singing of Dikshithar's compositions in a concert. "Alapana, Kalpana svarams are a formality for Diskhithar's compositions. This is my sincere observation; why look to elaborate when the composition is so beautiful; many times it might not be an embellishment. Compositions like Sadachaleswaram, Chetashri – just enjoy the composition. Shri Mooladhara won't take a second speed swara; need to be sensitive to that. You can elaborate with care; it is not a must always. "

Dr T S Sathyavathi's brilliant approach to increase our awareness and sensitivity to what is codified in the Sangira Sampradaya Pradarshini (SSP) was akin to an aural picture is worth a thousand words. She first sang Annapurne Visalakshi, a popular kriti in ragam Sama attributed to Dikshithar but not in SSP, followed by Guruguhaya which is in the SSP and reveals firsthand Dikshithar's more meditative and soulful Sama. I finally understood why my aunt Anandhi Ramachandran gave me her personal Guruguhaya cassette; perhaps, she too was struck by these completely new colors of Dikshithar's Sama when she heard it for the first time at a concert, persuaded that vocalist to record it for her and was determined to share that experience.

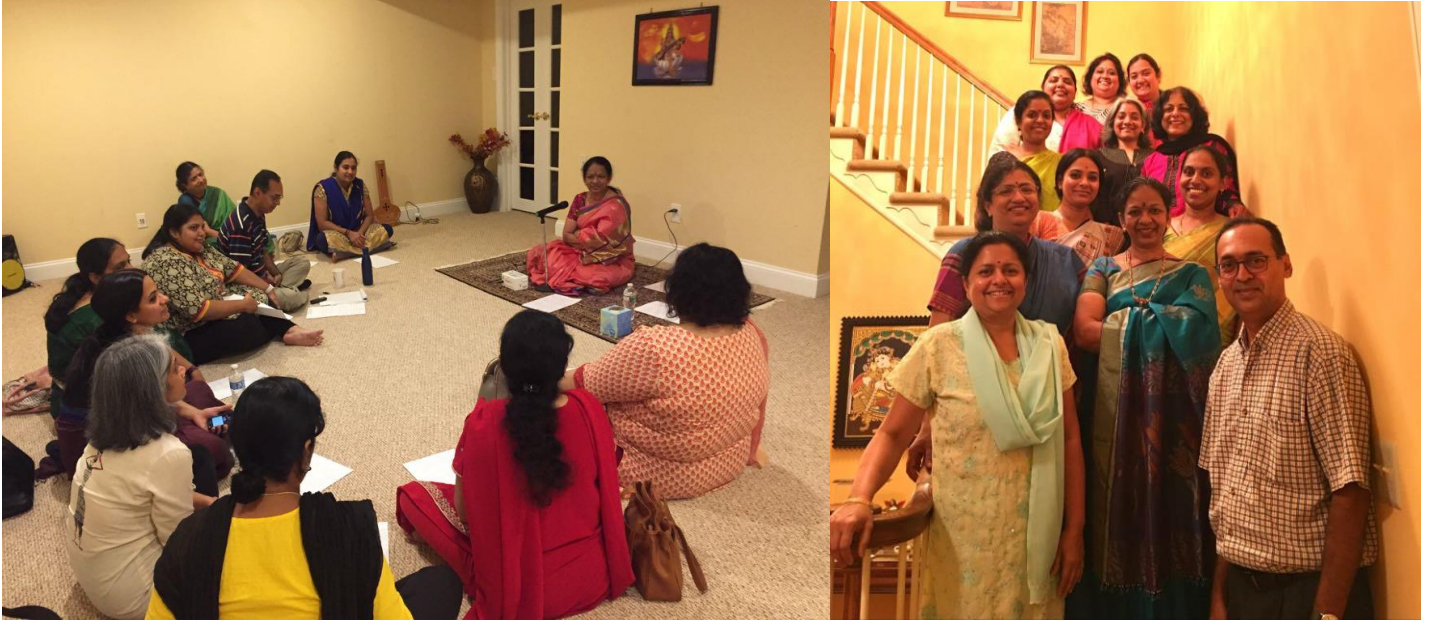
The compositions featured with additional insightful highlights from Dr T S Sathyavathi can be read from [Sruti Smriti Blog](http://srutipbila.tumblr.com). (<http://srutipbila.tumblr.com>)

Nandita provided excellent accompaniment to her guru and clarity was her hallmark too – open throated singing, clarity in diction and musicality. Sandhya Menon's violin accompaniment was melodious and she aced the challenge of following the raga elaboration aligned with what the SSP stipulates in the Dikshithar style of the raga. Dikshithar's compositions and their kalapramana are equally demanding from the laya perspective and Keerthi also aced the challenge with fidelity to nadam.

Music Workshop

I was also fortunate to attend the fantastic workshop by Dr T S Sathyavathi on the compositions of Mysore composers. Every successive day of class brought more joyful anticipation for when it would be time for the workshop; what the new composition and related gems of musical, lyrical, linguistic insight would be; the joy of singing together harmoniously. And it all happened because of Dr T S Sathyavathi's passion for teaching and her evident joy in our sincerity and enthusiasm to learn. Dr T S Sathyavathi had meticulously planned for the 4 classes from the selection of

the songs, to the allotment of time for new songs and the revision of what was taught the prior days to the punctuality of the start time each day. She gave us clear beautifully handwritten notation for each song.



Dr T S Sathyavathi's ethos of respecting the composers and staying true to their vision was anchored in every aspect of her teaching. She first read each line of the lyric clearly and explained the meaning and mood of the song. At the outset, she pointed out where the words must be split and where they must not be split. She ensured that this would manifest in our singing, by pointing out when to take the breadth so that the words would not be split incorrectly in that line. She had the rare patience to make us repeat multiple times until we got it clearly - the variations in each sangati, the gamakas, and the eduppus. And Dr T S Sathyavathi went a step further and also showed us multiple variations for the line or song endings, to spur our own creativity.

Here are the eclectic and melodic songs we learnt – 4 Devarnamas and 4 kritis, all by Mysore composers.

- Varalakshmi in ragam Gowri Manohari , talam rupakam composed by Mysore Vasudevacharya
- Ratna Kanchuka Dharini in ragam Kambodhi, talam michra chapu composed by Muthiah Bhagavathar
- Shri Rajarajeswari in ragam Lalita, talam rupakam composed by Mysore Maharaja
- Madhava Nannu Brova va javali in ragam khamas, talam Adi composed by Mysore Sadashiva Rao
- Nambadiru Ee Deha tuned by Dr T S Sathyavathi in hauntingly beautiful Tanaroorpi (Vivaadi mela 6) talam Khanda Chapu composed by Purandaradasa
- Kagada bandidi in ragam kaapi, tisra nadai eka , composed by Purandaradasa
- Marulu madikondiyalle in ragam neelambari, talam adi composed by Purandaradasa
- Rangana nodire, ragamalika Brindavana Saranga, Sivaranjani, Amrithavarshini tuned by Dr T S Sathyavathi, Mishra Gathi composed by Purandaradasa

As you can see in just 4 days, we covered a kaleidoscope of ragas, talas, languages and elevated our understanding and fidelity to the swara, raga, laya, kalapramana and the underlying lyrics of these compositions. Of course, we have to build on this strong foundation and assiduously practice each of these kritis hundreds of times to fully assimilate them.

Please read the feedback from some of the participants in the workshop as part of the Survey Feedback section towards the end of this report.

We unanimously look forward to our next workshop with Dr T S Sathyavathi!

A Big THANK YOU to Revathi for hosting the workshop, and of course to Sruti for making it all happen!

Kamakshi Mallikarjun is a classical music enthusiast, a member of Sruti and local contributor to Sruti Ranjani.

Far from the madding crowd and into a Temple hall bliss

by Dinakar Subramanian



Bliss - that is exactly how I felt when I was at the Philadelphia Museum of Art for the Music in the galleries (MITG) Sruti Outreach event on the afternoon of October 20 this year. Sruti worked with Greg Stuart (Museum Educator, Adult Learning) from the museum for this outreach event to showcase Indian American youth from the area to propagate awareness of Indian classical music to the mainstream public.

The Temple Hall in the Museum is a unique environment that houses parts of an original temple in south India from hundreds of years ago. This hall and the surroundings display idols from Indian mythology representing both the epics - the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Keeping this in mind, Sruti selected pieces that wove together the temple setting and the Ramayana theme.

The structure of the MITG had the artists perform 3 times for half an hour each that afternoon with the intent of organically having a rolling audience that was visiting the museum. The Phila museum is one of our favorite places to visit on a weekend and I could not wait to experience the afternoon with the young musicians. I could see the excitement building already in the area with the neatly arranged seats with the program flyer on them.



*L to R: Keerthi Ramani, Shishir Kumar, Kamalakiran Vinjamuri, Samyuktha Sreeram
Image courtesy of Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2018. Photo by Susan Beard photography.*

Though the artists were young they are not new to performing, with their skill and with the beautiful structure of Carnatic music, the musicians who have not played together before can easily gel and provide a synchronized performance and boy did they!! Kamalakiran Vinjamuri on the violin, Shishir Kumar on the saxophone, Samyuktha Sreeram on the ghatam and Keerthi Venkataramani on the mridangam presented a Mallari (celebrating a temple ritual)

followed by a kriti by Swati Tirunal - Bhavayami Raghuramam that illustrates the story of the Ramayana from young Rama's ascent to his coronation and a Thillana suited for dance in the ragam Dhanashri.

After the introductions, the music and the magic began. As the strains of the violin and the saxophone wafted through the Temple hall, people started walking in, drawn by the absolutely euphonic sounds emanating from the hall. The seats were full but there was additional foot traffic around the seats for people to catch a closer glimpse of what was going on in this hall.



The reactions of the generationally diverse audience were truly remarkable and unique. One of the ushers was totally taken in by the sound of the saxophone that he had a persistent smile throughout the afternoon. Curious people walked around the dais from both sides of the Temple hall to get a close look at the young artists and how the sounds were being emitted.

From my assessment, the audience consisted of art lovers, musicians, music students and other curious Georges. Two young couples with infants were thoroughly enjoying the program. The babies were quite happy and the dads were dancing to the music. Over 200+

people enjoyed the proceedings that afternoon, many of them recording segments of the music for later enjoyment.

Two things captivated me - one as a music aficionado and the second as a presenter. The first was the interplay between the young artists during every session; I enjoyed watching them enjoy themselves on stage. Kamalakiran and Shishir alternated their playing with repetitive and gradually escalating phrases in the songs which enhanced my enjoyment. They encouraged and appreciated each other with enthusiasm. Keerthi and Samyuktha providing wonderful percussive support that the total output was true synergy indeed.

As a presenter, I was amazed at how the program affected the audience - there was palpable excitement in the crowd and after each session, there were people who approached the musicians and asked questions about the instruments. I had people approach me with questions, one asked if these compositions were written for the saxophone and another if the clay-pot (ghatam) artist had any protective caps on her fingers to play it.

The show genuinely intrigued anyone within the listening radius of the Temple hall and left the attendees that included Sruti members on a blissful high. We all came away with another successful outreach program.

Dinakar Subramanian is an ex-President of Sruti and is part of the current Sruti Board of Directors. He has been teaching and performing carnatic music over many years.

Sopanasangeetham, A Laudable Contribution to Music by Kerala

by V. Namboodiri/Gireesan



Sopanasangeetham is the branch of music evolved in Kerala as an offspring from the wedlock between the classical music of south India and the folk musical worship system of Kerala. Though it is a form of worship of temple deities with hymns, the dimension are far deeper than what the eyes can behold. Though no deep studies have been made to this form of musical rendition, it opens up a wide area for researchers and musical students. The nomenclature is a recently coined one, but it is used both in a narrow sense, which was earlier known as “Kottippadsseva” and in a wider sense to represent a distinct style of rendition, or a separate school of classical music.

Kottippadisewa is a form of musical worship, a supplication, by a devoted artist either as part of his penance or as a part of a temple ritual. Here the rendition is meant only for the deity and not for the audience. In Kerala temples, music became a part of daily ritual. Like the priest doing pooja rituals inside the sanctum sanctorum, a specially designated artist would sing devotional songs right at the left side of the sopanam (sacred steps). He would also play rhythm on Edaykka and Chengila (thong), all by himself, along with his songs. It always preceded with three pious blows of a conch. Though the term Sopanasangeetham is used as synonym to kottippadisewa, of late it refers more as a style of music popularly used in Kerala like in Kathakali and Mohiniattam music too.

Evolution

The use of Music and Dance to worship the omnipotent divinities dates back to the origin of mankind across the globe. Most of them remained as it is, which is why they are called folk worship. The most popular style of worship in India is simple bowing down before the deity or offer of mites and following the rites. But by the evolution of time, dance and music earned equal importance in praising and pleasing the deity of a temple. I understand that this practice is very old when it was not strictly according to musical rules. When Geetha Govinda of Jayadevar was introduced the tunes of Carnatic classical music entered into sopanasangeetham, it became very attractive and became dear not only to the deity but even the devotees standing in front of sanctum silently praying.

Ragas

The main tunes, ragas are those taken from the Carnatic music. But even out of the perplexing range of Carnatic ragas only a few, which are more popular in Kerala, are used in Sopanasangeetham. Some of the ragas of carnatic music like Kalyani, Kamboji, Thodi, Mohanam, Sankarabharanam, Bhairavi, Nathanamakriya, Anandabhairavi, Yadukulakamboji, Dhanyasi, Sahana, and Bhoopalam etc. are very popular in Sopanasangeetham. At the same time a few pure Kerala ragas like Paadi, Samanthamalahari, Kanakkurinji, Puraneeru, sikhandi etc. are also quite in practice in this school of music. Of late, many artistes are trying many other ragas both from Carnatic music and Hindustani music to please the audience. Most important to note here is that the rigid laws and grammar of Carnatic ragas have been excused in the rendition in Sopanasangeetham, as long as the base tune, jeevaswara, of that raga has been maintained.

Thalas

The major rhythms used in Sopanasangeetham are almost the same as used in Carnatic music. You may be aware that rhythm in Kerala is a different form of art apart from the function of a percussion in music or dance. The thaalas of Kerala have distinct local names, though it may perfectly resemble some of the Carnatic taalas. For example, the Kerala thaalas namely Chempada, Atantha, Muriyatantha, Champa, Panchari, mainly used in the rhythm schools like Melam, Thayampaka, Panchvadyam, Keli etc. are also used in Sopanasangeetham. Over and above them, some exclusive Kerala thaalas like Marmathaalam, Kundanachi etc. are also used in sopanasangeetham. Sopanasangeetham is generally played either in slow (Vilambitha kalam) or medium (Madhyama kalam) tempo.

Difference

You must have noticed that unlike North Indian Classical Music, the South Indian classical music is almost hundred percent devotional ones, may be in praise of different deities. Sopanasangeetham, in its narrow sense, i.e. as

the 'kottippadsseva', is purely a devotional rendition. The only bhava present in it is Bhakthi and the only rasa is shantham. In its wider sense, as it appears in Kathakali or Mohiniattam, sopanasangeetham is a pure bhava sangeetham, which means emotional music. All the emotions, as the stage demands, would be expressed in such music. As per Indian theory of dance there are nine major nine rasas represented by the respective nine bhavas, and a few ancillary rasas and its bhavas. It is in this respect the two schools of sopanasangeetham differs. The major difference between the classical music and sopanasangeetham is in its purity of raga. Classical music is very adamant in its rules regarding ragas, whereas sopanasangeetham offers freedom to the singer to render as the mood demands, though within the confines of the ragas. A slight variation in the contours of raga would be pardoned if needed to maintain the mood the situation commands as long the detour is not out of the raga. In classical music bhava is totally absent but in sopanasangeetham, bhava is the major attraction and as important as the raga itself. It also establishes its variance from Harikatha of Tamil Nadu, where also Bhakthi is the undercurrent, in so far as in Harikatha, the raga rigidity is maintained whereas rigidity is absent in sopanasangeetham.

Vishnu Namboodiri is a music researcher living in Mumbai and he was guided for this article by M.S Gireesan who was the vocal artist for Sunanda Nair's Mohini Attam performance at Sruti in November 2018

An evening of Lasyam with Sunanda Nair

by Rubina Sudarman / T. Sarada

Dedication, devotion and passion comes to life when an artist gives her fullest to a performance. That's how we sum up the evening of pure Lasyam by Kalasree Dr Sunanda Nair, a product of Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya. With such strong background and structured training, Dr Sunanda's exhibition of subtle nuances in the Mohiniattam art form was no surprise. The command she had over the subject and the characters reflects on the amount of work that has gone into character analysis and attention to details. Accompanied by Vocalist Kalamandalam Gireesan, Janardhana Rao on Mridagam and Raman Kalyan on flute under the banner of Sruti Philadelphia Dr Nair enthralled the audience with her graceful moments.



Rasanubhava, a characterization of four women at different periods and backgrounds were portrayed with their emotions and intelligence in depth. Dr Sunanda Nair commenced her performance with a Ganapathy Shloka an invocation to Lord Ganesha followed by the first Character Savitri in Ragam Kedargowla where she depicted the story of Savitri and her negotiations with Lord Yama to return her husband to life. Dr Kanak rele's choreography with a blend of emotions and nritya aspect brought the beauty of Mohiniattam in every moment of her piece.



The second Character Shikandi was a challenging piece where the striking contrast of female and male characteristics were brought in as the Nayika transcended from Amba to Shikandi. Amba's anguish, insult and disappointment all at once was displayed with so much poise and intensity that the viewers nearly felt pity for the character and justified her actions to seek revenge. Dr Nair's clarity in her thoughts and adept handling of this could not have been better conveyed to the audience.

She moved on to her third piece Ghandari in ragam Kanada. A special reference to the princess Gandhari who was heartbroken when she realized her groom to be was the blind King of Hastinapura "Dritharashtra". A not so commonly depicted character in Mohiniattam of the iconic queen, who was devastated and showed her resistance to life and eventually witnessed the doom of her sons. Here again, Dr Nair's portrayal of the character made the audience feel for the queen's predicament.

The concluding piece was her all time favourite Kubja in Ragam Yadukulakamboji set to Mishra Chapu Thalam. The episode of the hunch backed maiden who yearned for

Lord Krishna exhibited a river of devotion. Narrating the story, Sunanda Nair's nuanced abhinaya brought to life the lyrical quality of Late Sree Kavalam Narayana Panicker's composition.

Indeed, a well-thought out, intelligent and immersive performance!

Rubina Sudharman is a dancer and dance teacher in the New Jersey / New York area and is trained in Bharatanatyam, Mohiniattam, Kathakali and Kuchipudi



Dr Sunandha Nair's Mohini Attam program was a cultural journey into Kerala from an auditorium seat. From the moment DR Nair appeared on stage, an aesthetic image of the visual art scene of Kerala was projected. With elegance, grace and beauty she covered the entire stage with her steps without missing a beat or losing track of the emotions and hand movements, (Bhavam and Angyam/Abhinayam).

A few scenes ably assisted by the music arrested my attention:

Savithri and Yama. Savithri's feelings when with clever logic and desperate pleading she tells Yama, that since she took seven steps with him, (Ezhu Suwadu), are they not friends?



L to R: Janardhana Rao, Kalamandalam Gireesan, Raman Kalyan

Gandhari's exuberant joy about all the wealth of the kingdom she is entering is dashed to bitter disappointment when she learns that her future husband is blind. That raw emotion was expressed brilliantly.

Sikhandi's dual emotion and demeanor, the woman in the man and the man in the woman in such rapid sequences could not have been depicted without the virtuosity of DR Nair.

The old lady begging Lord Krishna to accept at least a tiny portion of her sandal wood paste, she is making for Kamsa, (Itre Kalabham) came out as a combination of longing, pious offering and pleading; her rapture when the flute announced her Lord's presence was a an unforgettable moment, as presented by DR Nair

Mohini Attam does not depend on elaborate and complicated foot work for a good reason. Advancing a story without distraction is the basis. The music was ideally suited to the same goal. The artists did a fantastic presentation of enunciating the Malayalam wording with the Bhavas clearly coming through. The ending with Narayaneeyam was an additional bonus.

I thank Sruti for bringing an art form like this. We have to thank Dr Sunanda Nair for giving us all an authentic Mohini Attam recital with well-complemented music.

T. Sarada has been a strong supporter of Sruti. Sarada worked in the library/publication committee for a few years. She enjoys Music, Indian and western classical including operas.

History of Sri Thyagaraja by Sunandita Suresh



Sri Thyagaraja was the most celebrated Carnatic Music saint, along with Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri. Born on May 4, 1767, to Kakarla Ramabrahmam and Seethamma, he was named Thyagaraja after Lord Thyagaraja, the representative deity of the Thiruvavur, the town which he was born in. Thyagaraja's extreme and unfaltering devotion to Lord Rama was established at a young age, as his father taught him to worship Lord Rama, and introduced him to Rama Taraka Mantra. This inspired him to create his first composition at the age of thirteen, Namo Raghavaya in ragam desika thodi. Thyagaraja does not have any lines of direct descent due to the death of his only daughter and grandson, however, his followers keep his legacy. Thyagaraja started learning music with his guru Sri Sonti Venkataramanayya. Later in his career, his guru invited Thyagaraja to his house to perform one of his compositions, where he performed his famous Endaro Mahanubhavulu, the fifth of the Pancharatna Krithis. His guru told the king about the genius of Thyagaraja. The king wishing to hear this amazing compositions himself offered Thyagaraja immense wealth and gifts and invited him to sing at the royal court. However, Thyagaraja was completely unappealed by the presentation of wealth and riches, and with another otherworldly piece, Nidhi Chala Sukhama, rejected the king's offer. Upon hearing this, out of anger and jealousy Thyagaraja's brother threw all of his idols into the river Cauvery. Out of pure anguish, Thyagaraja journeyed to all of the temples in South India and composed many more songs. Then, with the help of Lord Rama himself, he managed to find all of the idols and attained Moksha on Vaikunta Ekadasi.

Endaro Mahanubhavulu is truly one of Sri Thyagaraja's sweetest compositions, which I was lucky enough to learn from my guru Smt. Uma Sivakumar. When we take apart this amazing composition, we can see the true essence that Sri Thyagaraja is trying to convey. The first line Endaro mahanubhavulu andariki vandanamulu literally means that there are many great men, and to all, my namaskarams. The message Sri Thyagaraja is trying to convey in this line is the respect he has to the men who have attained extreme spiritual experience. Chanduru Varnuni Antha Chandamunu Hrudayaaravindamuna Juchi Brahmanandam Anu Bhavimchu Vaaru translates to these devotees support the lord, who has gained bliss and power in their lotus-like heart. The following ten charanams describe how the devotees of Rama serve him, as well as how much happiness and knowledge it brings them to do so. This sweet composition shows the compassion and devotion Sri Thyagaraja has for Rama and his devotees. Sri Thyagaraja is truly a musical genius, to be remembered in Carnatic history.

Sunandita Suresh is a ninth grader learning Carnatic Music and is a part of Sruti Youth Group

Shruthi: Freedom within Boundaries by Dhiya Ravinuthala



At least five times a week, I sit down, crisscross applesauce and open a stiff, black bag that encases a cream-colored box, unravel the power cord, plug it in and lightly tap the red power button. With a sudden jolt, as if surprised, it starts humming the notes. I sit up straight and like a clear, confident stroke of a paintbrush, I let my voice dwell on the shadjam for a good thirteen seconds.

When I go through this simple routine today, it isn't as nerve-racking as it used to be. But the younger me thought otherwise. I wasn't exactly passionate about learning the traditional music of my ancestral land. And I wasn't exactly talented either.

It was a stretch for me to take lessons once a week, being corrected over and over again by my perfectionist teacher, listening to my frustrated mom on the drive back home. My mom would force me to practice, and every time, it was a chorus of my quiet mumbling and my mom's loud exasperation. My dad would make me sing at every possible opportunity. I couldn't understand why my parents were so invested. The praise I received from people gave me a temporary sense of elation, and so I continued. But it never seemed like what I did was special. I just did what my parents planned for me. Over the next few years, the question: kept coming back: Why am I doing this? Soon, I found myself in a tight spot. I wasn't committed enough to practice and do well, but just the idea of quitting made my stomach drop. My parents were tired of nagging me to practice and I was faced with the choice of continuing or quitting. When faced with this choice, I discovered something invaluable: this art is me. Every time I sing, the momentary hesitation is wiped out of emergence of a clean sound. Although I didn't enjoy it at first, I'm happy my parents forced me to learn Carnatic music. By no means am I an expert. But I have found a source of happiness in Carnatic music.

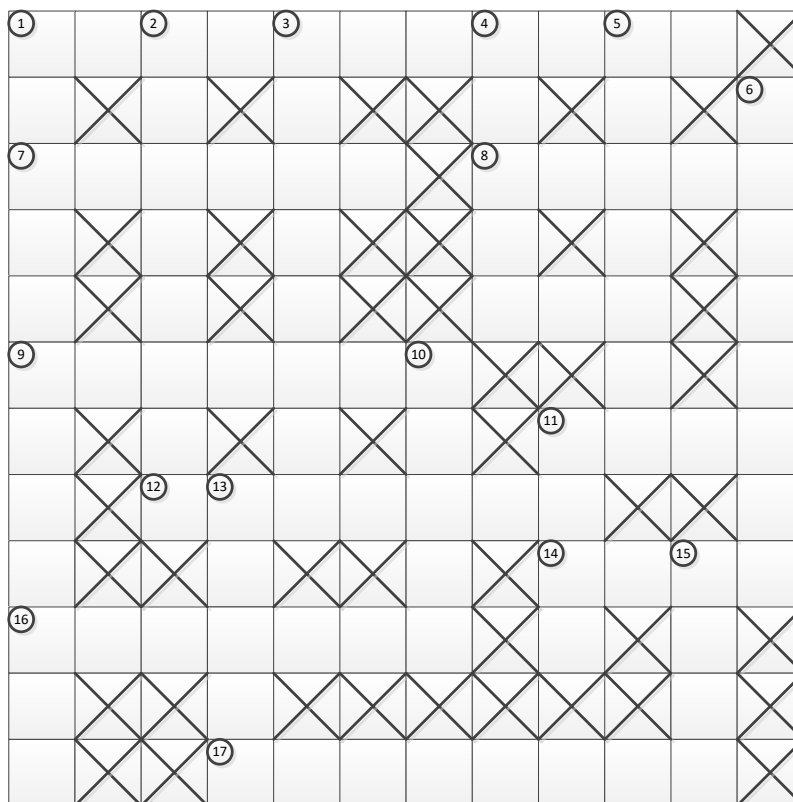
It isn't for the shallow praise of friends, or for the approval of my parents anymore. When I listen closely to the drone of the Shruthi, I can hear hundreds of years of tradition, culture and emotion. I know that this is a permanent part of me. And I know that I won't let it go.

Dhiya Ravinuthala is a High School Junior. She is learning Carnatic Music and is a part of Sruti Youth Group.

Classical Crosswords (Senior / Junior)

Composed by Balaji Raghothaman

Senior Crossword



ACROSS

1. First of five, created by one of three
7. The river flows by *jhambupati*
8. *Devagandharam* by another name
9. Three speeds
11. Scale for 1-Across
12. 'He Danced, that Ranga' – a P. Dasar kriti in Raga 10-Down
14. Digging deep into the 8th melakarta
16. Current board member sings *Bho Shambo*
17. Kanjira is an example this type of vadyam

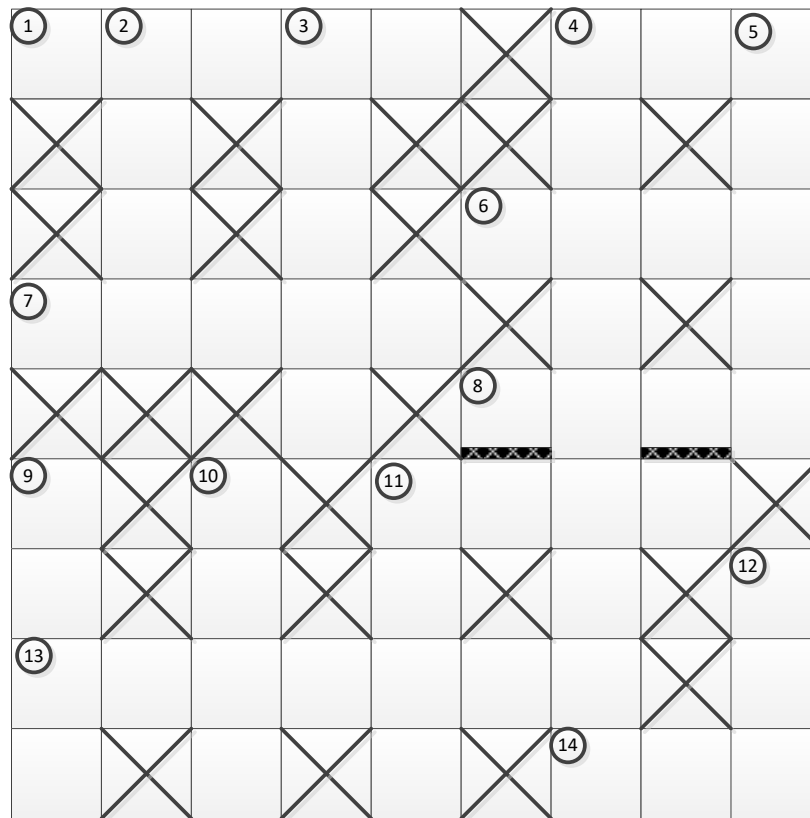
DOWN

1. Scale for *marugelara*
2. Adding 'gravitas' to 11-Across
3. The Sun, sung in harikhambhoji
4. Raga for *bala kanakamaya*
5. Scale for *teliyaleru rama*
6. We all learnt a *swarajathi* in this raga. The name refers to an idol of Vishnu supposedly burrowed under the sanctum in the Kanchi Kamakshi temple
10. Raga of the 3rd one in the list started by 1-across
11. An Irish/English musical form that inspired Dikshitar
13. Swara pattern whose name means 'to skip over'
15. 'Lord Lord' I serve at your lotus feet in *mayamalava gowla*

*Please try a couple of spellings.. For e.g. 'b,s,c,t' for 'bh,sh,ch,th', 'a' for 'aa' etc.

Please see the last page for answers

Junior Crossword



ACROSS

1. Us
4. Tala with 2 of 8-across, followed by 2 dhrutams
6. Raga for *Maha ganapatim*
7. 1st part of a traditional 3-part concert segment
8. Tala element that means 'short'
11. A style of singing/playing
13. 3rd part of concert segment that starts with 7-across
14. The world revolves around this.

DOWN

2. Tyagaraja sang mainly about this deity
3. Middle part of a concert segment that starts with 7-across
4. If you are a Bharatanatyam dancer, you have to plenty of these, till your knees hurt.
5. Basic steps/postures in b.natyam, of which 4-down is one.
9. Misra-----, kanda-----, etc.
10. Add this prefix to 6-across to get its parent
11. Rhythm is calculated in multiples of this
12. You can be one at a concert, or turn one on if it is too warm.

*Please try a couple of spellings.. For e.g. 'b,s,c,t' for 'bh,sh,ch,th', 'a' for 'aa' etc.

Please see the last page for answers

Bala Bhavam Photos



Top to Bottom

- 1) Bhaskari & Sindhu Budhavarapu – Vocal;
Siddarth Ashokkumar – Violin; Srihari Raman –
Mridangam (Dec 9, 2017)
- 2) Shishir Kumar - Saxophone; Shweta Narasimhan
– Violin; Sanjay Subramaniam, Mridangam (Dec
9, 2017)
- 3) Rumya Venkateswaran – Vocal; Vishal Sowmyan
– Violin; Srihari Raman – Mridangam (Oct 6,
2018)
- 4) Anjali Talluru – Bharatanatyam (June 2, 2018)

Sruti Community Photos





Rama Vaidyanathan - Dance Workshop Reviews



Review by La'Toya Latney:

Bharatanatyam is more than an exceptionally beautiful art form, it is a staple for some of us. My name is La'Toya and as a child I watched my South Indian friends learn this lovely dance form and subsequently I learned about its culture. I was fortunate to find a guru that would train me as an adult. I have commuted from Philadelphia to NYC for 10 years and completed my arangetram in 2015. In this time, my guru has ensured that I was exposed to and given audience with the greatest exponents of the art. In this rare opportunity, I was able to finally meet and learn from Rama Vaidyanathan, one of the greats, at a location closer to home!

She is an amazing inspiration and one that I have admired from afar for many years.



The workshop experience was fantastic and one of my favorites. As a non-native South Indian, it is extremely helpful and important for one to gain access to the language, the music and the meaning of an item, long before attempting to learn its choreography. Rama Akka sat us in a circle, much to my delight, and walked through each stanza, all of the meanings, and intricately described the emotion of the item. It best prepared me to grasp the choreography to follow. Before attending the workshop, I feared I would not retain the item or be able to keep up. Her teaching style erased this

concern from the beginning. It was a bit scary to try to perform the entire item at the end, but I was extremely grateful for the second integrated approach taken to provide the dancers with tools for personal practice. We again sat down, after learning the item, counted out loud each jati in each sequence. This was phenomenal! In what would take someone like myself months to learn, I was able to digest the item in the timeframe of the workshop. As an artist, I have always been struck by her artistry. As a teacher, I was spellbound, grateful, and completely inspired by her nurturing and thorough teaching style. Thank you Sruti for hosting such an amazing guru and artist, we are truly grateful for the opportunity

La'Toya is a Clinical Zoo and Exotic Animal Medicine veterinarian and Assistant Professor at the University of Pennsylvania Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Her South Indian group of friends and family have continued to foster my passion for bharatanatyam dance (Guru: Malini Srinivasan, disciple of Sir C V Chandrasekar)



Review by Shuchi Buch:

It was a great opportunity for me to learn from Guru Rama Vaidyanathan at the Sruti Academy's workshop. The work shop was excellent! So many students could get a chance from Ramaakka. It was on such a place that east coast students can get the chance to learn. I came from Maryland. Within few hours i could learn the one full performance level Bhartanatyam item - Madhurashtakam.

Apart from these all, to learn from guru Akka Rama Vaidyanathan is a great opportunity for a dancer. Thanks to SRUTI for giving us an opportunity to learn and eagerly waiting for the next workshop.

Executive director of Taal Academy of Dance, Washington DC - Ms Shuchi Buch is Vishard in Indian classical Bharatntyam dance and has experience of more than two decades in teaching, choreographing and performing dance across India and in the United States.



Review by Arathi Narayan:

Rama Vaidyanathan's dance workshop was wonderful and I was so glad to have had the opportunity to attend it. The workshop was well organized by Sruti and the cost was very reasonable.

It was a great experience to learn from Rama herself who is a dancer of high caliber. As dancers, we felt rejuvenated and challenged to take our dance to another level with Rama's beautiful choreography. She first talked about the composition and the way she choreographed the piece. I really liked how she had jathis interspersed with the ashtakam to keep the dance energetic. The Sanskrit shloka by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was used very cleverly as the opening piece as well as like the arudhi. I also loved how Rama decided to end the piece by introducing elements of Krishna devotees dancing during Krishna Janmashtami in Vrindavan. I thoroughly enjoyed being in the same space as Rama and learning the beautifully choreographed Madhurashtakam.

Thank you to Sruti for bringing this dance workshop to the dancers in our area.

Arathi Narayan is an experienced Bharatanatyam dancer and teacher and runs the Natyaarathi School of Dance

Survey Feedback from Sruti Event 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 take them into account in planning our events.

Thyagaraja Aradhana – Hindu Temple of Delaware, Hockessin DE (March 2018)

“Excellent planning and execution. Everything went on time, which is very important to sustain a full day. Utsava Sampradaya group was a perfect start to the day. The main concert was excellent. Sruti is doing a great job of bringing some of these upcoming and highly promising artists for Aradhana. As with Ramakrishnan Murthy few years ago, Amrutha Venkatesh and now this young artist Aishwarya Raghunath. Please continue to do this.”

Ramakrishnan Murthy – Agnes Irwin College, Bryn Mawr PA (April 2018)

“Wonderful concert. I am so glad that Sruti presented Ramakrishnan Murthy. The team was excellent. Very enjoyable concert. Glad that Sruti came back to this popular venue for a concert. This is perfect for Carnatic music concerts. It feels full how many ever people are there. The acoustics is excellent. It is also very accessible for most. I am little concerned that we are having other concerts far away in Bucks county. Are we moving away from the Sruti base?”

“Ramakrishnan Murthy was phenomenal! He embodies classicism at its best! Charumathi and Manoj Siva are high caliber accompanists and it was pleasure hearing them.”

Vivartana – Delaware Valley College, Doylestown PA (May 2018)

“The performers were so awesome. Really enjoyed each piece. Thank you Sruti for organizing this event.”

“The venue was quite beautiful and seemed cozy, although the acoustics had some issues, which I do not know if it is inherent to the theater. Very good vadas and tea.”

“Audio system was sub-par for Sruti standards.”

Sudha Raghunathan – Hindu Temple of Delaware, Hockessin DE (May 2018)

“It was a quintessential Sudha concert. I came in with the expectations of a good Sudha concert and got it. It was great to see a nice crowd for the concert and this concert worked well at the temple. Sruti has so far done a good job of deciding which artist to collaborate with the temple for. Few years ago, Shri BMK concert was held here as a collaboration, and now Sudha. These kind of artists (big names with popular appeal) work well at the temple. Please continue to use the discretion in figuring out which performances (not any and all artists) to collaborate with the temple.”

“Excellent main artist and accompanying artists. Started on time. Well organized seating. Very good parking arrangements. Delicious dinner with fast, efficient serving. Kudos to Sruti and Hindu temple staff!”

Guitar Prasanna – Ibrahim Theater, Philadelphia PA (May 2018)

“Hall was compact and nice. Audio system was tuned before the concert and it worked well without any feedback. Glad that Artists gave good importance to both percussion artists. If we are calling it a classical traditional Carnatic Concert, I think it should have ended it with a classical Managlam also.”

“Prasanna is one of the greatest guitarists I have known. He is equally skillful in both Carnatic and western. He is not only a great musician but great human being. My son is a big fan of Prasanna. All our family members joined this concert and loved it. Thanks to Sruti for making this concert happen!”

Ramana Balachandhran – Tohickon Middle School, Doylestown PA (June 2018)

"I had never heard the artist before and was blown away by his ingenuity. Kudos to all the knowledgeable Sruti board members who selected this concert despite the artist not being a big name yet."

"Venue was too far - felt like we were driving up to NJ. I understand we have to try out different venues and areas. However, this venue does not seem to be located centrally to Sruti membership. So please consider this for future."

Rithvik Raja– Tohickon Middle School, Doylestown PA (June 2018)

"Beautiful and involved music by Rithvik. Although I have heard his name before, not heard him. I felt quite transported by his involvement in the music. Great accompanists that also helped life the concert. Overall very good choice and balance of artists this spring"

"His song choice and manodharma were simply wonderful, it was nice to be able to enjoy some good live music"

Pantula Rama – Agnes Irwin School, Bryn Mawr PA (Sep 2018)

"Very good venue. We loved the sincerity of the artists and the solid music provided by them"

"Very satisfying."

VVS Murari and Vittal Ramamurthy – Community Music School, Trappe PA (Sep 2018)

"Overall experience was great - the camaraderie between the artistes and mutual respect was very clear and made it a truly enjoyable performance"

"Excellent rendition of Kharahara Priya (chakkani), RTP was excellent. Mridamgam was superb."

Dr Sathyavathi Music Workshop, Exton PA (Oct 2018)

"It was a one of a kind experience to learn from a Guru like Dr TS Sathyavathi who is not only well versed in music but also a master of sahitya. She is able to look at a composition through the eyes of the composer and make meaningful interpretations, which is no easy task. She is then able to convey that to her students in simple terms to help them appreciate the lyrical beauty in the Krithi- a very unique gift that she possesses! The most important take away for me was and I quote Dr Sathyavathi- "appreciate each and every composer for their creativity without trying to compare them!" – Revathi Subramony

"It was an honor and privilege to attend Dr. Sathyavathi's workshop. She made sure we understood the Ragam, Bhavam and Laya of every song she taught us. Understanding the meaning of sahityam made singing the song that much more enjoyable. It was truly a great experience. Thanks to Sruti for arranging the workshop." – Chitra Sundararajan

"Dr T S Sathyavathi is a renaissance woman - a musician, musicologist, Sanskritist! And along with that immense scholarship, the values of humility, utter immersion and laser sharp focus on the Bhava of the composer and the composition, the raga and the Laya, the sahitya and the kavya in the sahitya! We are incredibly fortunate for this experience." – Raji Padmanabhan

Dr Sathyavathi Lecture Demonstration – Hindu Temple of Delaware, Hockessin DE (Oct 2018)

"This shows that Sruti is serious about promoting classical knowledge. As an avid rasika and practitioner, programs like this encourages me to dive deeper into this art form."

Sunanda Nair – Mohini Attam – Montgomery County Community College (Nov 2018)

"Authentic Mohini Attam presentation. Beautifully, gracefully and elegantly done by Dr Nair It was a treat to see her move around the stage in circles covering the entire stage without missing a beat. Excellent hand movements, highlight of Mohini Attam and Bhavas jumping out of her face so fast. With more time I am sure she would have shown a few of her hand movements that form a significant part of the art form. The music was a delight with well-crafted wordings. Narayaneeyam ending was a treat. Rendered so well. Thanks, Sruti!"

"Lively discussion session. Dance session was excellent"

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Answers for Crosswords

Senior Crossword

ACROSS

1. JAGADANANDA
7. YAMUNA
8. ABERI
9. TRIKALA
11. NATA
12. ADIDANO
14. TODI
16. REVATHI
17. UPAPAKKA

DOWN

1. JAYANTASHREE
2. GAMBHIRA
3. DINAMANI
4. ATANA
5. DHENUKA
6. BILAHARI
10. ARABI
11. NOTE
13. DHATU
15. DEVA

Junior Crossword

ACROSS

1. SRUTI
4. ATA
6. NATA
7. RAGAM
8. LAGU
11. BANI
13. PALLAVI
14. SUN

DOWN

2. RAMA
3. TANAM
4. ARAMANDI
5. ADAVU
9. CAPU
10. CALA
11. BEAT
12. FAN

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

Sruti Concerts—Down the memory lane (1997-1998)



1997—Kadri Gopalnath



1997—T.N. Krishnan



1998—N. Ramani



1998—Sanjay Subrahmanyam

Photos—Courtesy of Panchanadam Swaminathan



Wishing everyone Happy Holidays!

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2019 Event Lineup



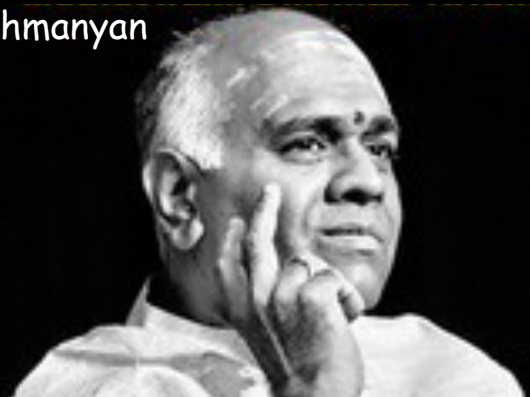
Ranjani and Gayatri



Sanjay Subrahmanyam



Jayanthi Kumaresh



Vijay Siva



Purbayan Chatterjee



Janaki Rangarajan



Kiranaivali Vidyasankar



Amrutha Venkatesh

Sruti 2019 sponsorships are now available at

www.sruti.org

More events being planned

Event lineup and artists subject to change