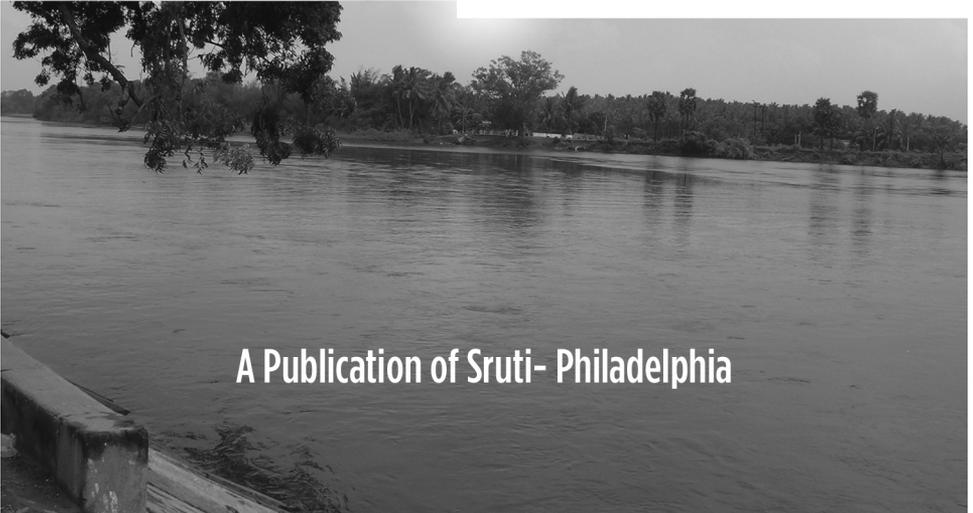




SRUTI

The India Music and Dance Society

Thyagaraja Aradhana 2010



A Publication of Sruti- Philadelphia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Description | Page No. |
|--|----------|
| Letter from the Publications and Outreach Committee | 2 |
| Tyagaraja - A Short Biography- <i>Chetana Suresh</i> | 3 |
| Tyagaraja Aradhana at Allentown- <i>N. Soundararajan</i> | 4 |
| Rishi Raman on Thyagaraja | 5 |
| Common Courtesy at concerts- <i>Rasikan</i> | 5 |
| The English Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini Project: A testimonial to technology- <i>P. P. Narayanaswami and Vidya Jayaraman</i> | 7 |
| A Musical Journey Begins- <i>Veena Kanumalla</i> | 11 |
| Impressions Chennai Season 2009-2010 | |
| The Chennai Music Season- <i>Kiranaivali Vidyasankar</i> | 12 |
| A Musical New Year- <i>Sanjay Narayanan</i> | 16 |
| My impressions of the Chennai Music Season-2009 | 17 |
| Margashi MahaUtsava on Jaya TV- <i>Priyanka Dinakar</i> | 20 |
| A Grand G.N.B. Centenary in Texas | 21 |

SRUTI- The India Music and Dance Society is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in the Philadelphia area and founded in 1986. Sruti's principal mission is to promote and present Indian classical music and dance. In addition Sruti also seeks to educate the Philadelphia community at large about Indian arts. Sruti is a volunteer-run organization. Its leadership comprises of an elected Board of Directors and several committees. Sruti publishes an annual magazine Sruti Ranjani and a periodical, Sruti Notes. During the past twenty three years, SRUTI has grown from presenting three to four concerts a year to presenting eight to ten concerts a year. All this has been made possible with recognition and funding from many granting agencies and corporations in addition to a loyal and appreciative audience. SRUTI has received generous grants from private foundations and public organizations including the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Philadelphia Foundation, Dance Advance and Philadelphia Music Project (funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts), the Stockton-Rush Bartol Foundation, Sam Fels Foundation and the Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News.

SRUTI BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2010

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Venkat Kilambi, President | Ramaa Nathan, Director Resources |
| Uma Prabhakar, President-elect | Sundari Balakrishnan, Director Publications |
| Ravi Pillutla, Secretary | Sudhakar Rao, Director Marketing |
| Usha Bala, Treasurer | Raji Venkatesan, Director |
| | Sunanda Gandham, Director |

The opinions expressed by the contributors of articles and reviews are published in a spirit of openness of communication and freedom of expression. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Sruti's Board or its members.

From the publications committee....

The day long celebration of Saint Thyagaraja's music by Sruti is one of many in India and the Diaspora which follows the Aradhana in Thiruvaiyaru. This booklet follows the tradition of previous years- a coming together of writing submissions from members of the music community. We hope that the musings of the music students in the community demonstrate that all the hard work that goes into the study and practice of classical music brings its own rewards. Included are eyewitness impressions of the recently concluded Chennai Music and Dance Season in Chennai and one from a young contributor who followed one set of events via television. We hope all the articles will be of interest.

The practice sessions for the group rendering of the Pancharatna Kritis and the Utsava Sampradaya Kritis have been in full swing. There was a tremendous interest in individual participation to pay homage to the Saint/Composer. Sruti's Aradhana day marks the beginning of the cultural season of the year. This year's featured artist is the vocalist Salem Shriram, accompanied by Sandhya Srinath on the violin and Rajna Swaminathan on the mridangam. Please visit our website for updates and programming for the year.

Sincerely,

Sundari Balakrishnan (balusundari@yahoo.com)

Rungun Nathan (runggunnathan@yahoo.com)

Gayathri Rao (gayathri.rao@comcast.net)

Jeya Sankaran (sankaranj@aetna.com)

Raman Visweswaran (ramanvv@hotmail.com)

Sundanda Gandham (sunanda_akula@yahoo.com)

PROGRAM

March 13 2010

08:00 AM Puja

08:15 AM Group Renditions: Utsava Sampradaya Kritis & Pancharatna Kritis

10:15 AM Individual Participations—1st session

01:30 PM Concert of the day— Vocal Concert by Salem Shriram and Party

04:00 PM Individual Participations—2nd session

Editor's Note: Photographs used on front cover are courtesy P. Swaminathan from his January 2009 visit to Tiruvaiyaru

Tyagaraja - A Short Biography

- Chetana Suresh

The famous Tyagaraja, ardent devotee of Rama, is perhaps the first to spring to mind when one thinks of Carnatic composers. Indeed, his contribution to music is unequivocal - during his life, he composed hundreds of songs, including the well-known “*Jagadanandakaraka*.” Today he is known as one of the three pillars of Carnatic music along with Muttuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri.

Tyagaraja was born on May 4, 1767 in Tiruvarur in Tamilnadu and was named after the presiding deity of the Tiruvarur temple, i.e., Tyagaraja. His father, Rama Brahman instilled his love for Rama in him. Tyagaraja started his musical training from an early age, learning under Sonti Venkataramanayya. He composed his first song at the age of 13 - *Namo Namu Raghayava* in Desikatodi.

His success as a musician grew after that, though he had little interest in wealth or fame. Being a devotee of Rama, he focused solely on music and *bhakti*, which he felt were synonymous. In his compositions, he tried to focus on *bhava* while not compromising the importance of raga and tala. He single-handedly redefined many of the 72 melakarta, infusing them with a completely new character and aesthetic quality.

Deeply religious, Tyagaraja viewed music as the way to practice his love for Rama. Though most of his songs were composed in praise of Rama, he also had several compositions on ethics, morality, wisdom, etc. He also unearthed several lost and forgotten ragas, and his compositions remain some of the only pieces to ever be performed in the ragas - some examples are Pratapavarali (*Vinanasakoni*), Jingala (*Anathudanu ganu*), and Jayanarayani (*Manavinivinuma*). Tyagaraja also perfected and embellished some of the ragas that are most common today. For example, Kharaharapriya and Harikambhoji owe many of their characteristics to his great creative mind.

One of the greatest defining characteristics of Tyagaraja’s compositions was their versatility. Each composition is completely unique, with its own style and meaning. His work spans from the most complicated kriti to the simplest keertana that even children can sing with ease. His signature or *mudra*, “*Tyagaraja*” is the common feature for these works.

He was married at age 18, to a woman named Parvati, who tragically died when Tyagaraja was only 23. He then married her sister, Kamalamba. The two had a daughter, Sitamahalakshmi. Unfortunately, there are no descendants of Tyagaraja, as his daughter’s only son, also named Tyagaraja, died at a young age.

It is said that Tyagaraja foreshadowed his time drawing to a close and composed a kriti in Ganavaridhi (*Dayajuchutaku*) in preparation. He joined a hermitage on January 5, 1847 and passed away the very next day. His musical legacy, however, is still very much alive and thriving. What other composer, after all, can boast of his own Aradhana in each city of the Carnatic music world to commemorate their work?

Chetana Suresh is a 17 year-old senior at Methacton High School. She has been learning Carnatic music for the past eight years, and is currently a student of Kiranavali Vidyashankar. She is planning to major in biology, with a premedical focus.

Tyagaraja Aradhana at Allentown

N. Soundararajan

It was a typical day in the Margazhi month - a group of devotees had gathered at the Allentown temple to recite Thiruppavai. As it goes, every gathering at a temple ends with a good meal at the kitchen / auditorium. The group was chatting about various topics ranging from recession, stock market collapse and Monte-Carlo risk analysis. It was then that Dr. Raghavachari spoke softly to the group and seeded the idea of organizing a Tyagaraja Aradhana. Although our temple had hosted several concerts by the sons of the late Sri Marajapuram Santanam (Ramachandran and Srinivasan), our initial reaction was a mixture of joy and skepticism. Dr. Chari recollected how he had started the Aradhana celebrations at Albany, NY with a group of 25 music devotees, and how later it grew into a large event. As everyone enthusiastically volunteered to take up this challenge and make it a reality, the first Tyagaraja Aradhana at Allentown was planned.



The Hindu temple at Lehigh Valley hosted its first Tyagaraja Aradhana on May 16th 2009. The event started with the traditional rendition of the Pancharatna kritis by a group of musically inclined local participants, including many youngsters, led by Smt. Sripriya Subramanian. Sri. N Shashidhar and Dr. T Ramakrishnan provided violin and mridangam accompaniment respectively. Following the pooja performed by Sri. Chandrasekharan, Sri. V Swaminathan gave a lecture on the first Pancharatna kriti, *Jagadanandakaraka*, who opined that it was basically a Namavali set to Raga Nattai.

The event featured individual performances by the students of teachers in and around the area such as Smt. Sripriya Subramanian (Lehigh Valley), Smt. Kiranavali Vidyashankar (Lansdale) and others. The highlight of the event was the 90-minute vocal concert featuring Tyagaraja kritis by budding artiste Avanthika Srinivasan of New Jersey. A student of Smt. Rajeswari Satish, her recent achievements include a runner-up prize at the CMANA's talent search competition held in May '08, first prize at the Great Composers day organized by CMANA in 2008, and third prize at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana festival in 2009. She was accompanied by Smt. Radhika Devarajan on the violin and Keerthi Venkataramani on the mridangam.

As the event came to an end, I remembered the words of the Aradhana's coordinator, Sri. Shankar, "There is a world of ecstasy out there, but it has to be realized by patiently self-educating the cochlea." And thus this event opened up opportunities to Lehigh Valley music lovers and youngsters.



Soundararajan is a fan of Carnatic music. He also enjoys film,jazz and western classical music. He lives in Breinigsville PA

Rishi Raman on Tyagaraja

Tyagaraga was a great Carnatic Music Composer. I have learnt three songs composed by him - Raminchuvarevarura in Raga Suposhini, Brovabharama in Raga Bahudari and Evarunnarubrova in Raga Malavasri. I also like to try Manavyalakim on my piano because it is a fast song. I like to listen to the Pancharatnas sung by a lot of people together.I think composing is very hard because you have to know ragas, talas and language. In his lifetime, he composed 800 krithis! I think that is quite brilliant! I think that is why everyone sings his song Pavamana as the last song in a concert.

Rishi Raman is a first grader at K.D.Markley Elementary school. He learns vocal music from Smt.KiranaVali Vidyasankar.

Common Courtesy at Concerts

-Rasikan

Does audience behavior at music or dance programs depend on the type of concert, venue, city, or other factors? Perhaps. It varies from fairly casual to highly disciplined. Over the years, I have been troubled by the conduct of some patrons at SRUTI events. But before we discuss that, let us look at patterns of audience conduct in two different contexts: Carnatic music concerts in India and Western classical music concerts in this country.

Recent issues of *Sruti* magazine from Chennai, India have carried articles and letters to the editor regarding the lack of discipline exhibited by audiences at Carnatic music concerts in India, and particularly in Chennai. It is not unusual for patrons to walk in and out in the middle of performances, including an alapana or swaraprastharam. VIPs are wont to barge in as they please and jostle past other people to get to a seat in the front row. The artists are expected to acknowledge their presence even if it means disrupting a complicated swarakalpana. Perhaps the worst annoyance is the audience exodus when the thani avarthanam begins. [As an aside, I recently saw a cartoon in a magazine that showed the mridanga vidwan carrying his instrument while the Secretary announced that for the benefit

of the audience, “today’s thani avartanam would be performed in the cafeteria”!] Frequent chatter, these days especially on cell phones, is another common annoyance.

By contrast, those who attend Western classical music concerts in this country know that doors close when the conductor begins the performance, and late arrivals (even if only by a few minutes) may not enter the concert hall until the piece being played has concluded. There is typically also pin-drop silence in the auditorium. The silence does not mean that the audience is not appreciating the music being produced on stage; on the contrary, the pin-drop silence allows the audience to be fully immersed in the music. In my observations, the conduct of SRUTI audiences falls between the above two extremes. Most concertgoers sit patiently through a concert, showing their enjoyment and appreciation with frequent applause. But a few people do wander in and out. It is understandably difficult to sit still for almost three hours, but one would hope that those who need to leave would do so (a) only after the alapana/swaraprastharam or between pieces, and (b) not rush back to their seats, or even consider remaining in the back of the hall for the rest of the concert in order to minimize their disruption of others’ enjoyment.

It is laudable that SRUTI audiences do not engage in mass exodus during thani avarthanam. In fact, the audience does applaud delightful mohras. Many visiting artists have expressed their appreciation of this characteristic.

Unfortunately all this discipline seems to break down at other SRUTI (community oriented) programs like the annual Thyagaraja Aradhana and the SRUTI Day programs. These are events for which many youngsters prepare hard and give of their best. That is good. What is not good is that, almost immediately after some of them perform, their parents whisk them away and leave the auditorium en masse. I am sure the parents are proud to see their children perform to an appreciative audience but do not show a minimal courtesy of staying behind to hear other youngsters. This attitude can be observed among some adults also, so much so the later artists perform to a nearly empty hall except for the organizers and a few diehard patrons. In fact during the Thyagaraja Aradhana of 2009, there were less than about a dozen persons in the hall for the last singer and even less for the mangalam. This is indeed very unfair to the performers.

I would earnestly appeal to all patrons to stay on after they or their children perform and encourage others. This is the minimum that they can do in return for SRUTI giving them a forum to exhibit their talents.

*About the author: An ardent admirer and lover of Carnatic music, **Rasikan** has been a regular contributor to Sruti Notes and other publications of Sruti.*

The English Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini Project: A testimonial to technology

P. P. Narayanaswami and Vidya Jayaraman

December 21, 1901: This was the day, a sixty year old musician/composer in a remote corner of a tiny village in Tamil Nadu began his meticulous documentation of centuries of musical wisdom handed down to his family over the ages. Those were not the days of technology, tools and collaboration, and one could surmise that electricity was not available in places such as Ettayapuram. After three long, and hard years of work, with a meticulous mathematical approach, he generated the various *gamaka* symbols, and undertook the gargantuan task of transposing the treasury of musical knowledge into paper, and brought out this text, the "*Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini*" (hereon referred to simply as the SSP).

As a humble tribute to this work, we (the authors) decided to take up the translation of this monumental work into English, and present some of the history and the experiences, that culminated in the English SSP, now available on the internet.

The Author – Subbarama Dikshitar

The biography of **Subbarama Dikshitar** is available to us in his own words, which he has included in his book as a section in the Chapter dealing with the life of 77 *Vaggeyakaras* (composers) (i.e., *Vaggeyakara Charitramu*). Subbarama Dikshitar was the grandson (and adopted son) of Balaswami Dikshitar, Muthuswami Dikshitar's younger brother. When Subbarama Dikshitar was seven years old, Balaswami Dikshitar took him to Ettayapuram and tutored him in Sanskrit, Telugu and the intricate *lakshya* and *lakshana* of our musical system. He bloomed as a versatile composer, when he was barely seventeen, and his talent in composing was obviously spotted by the Raja of Ettayapuram.

The role of Chinnaswami Mudaliyar

Any mention of the SSP will not be complete without mentioning A. M. Chinnaswami Mudaliyar, a Roman Catholic and a Latin scholar, with a Master's degree from Madras University. Amazed at the beauties of *karnatik* music, he not only wanted the Western world to understand the system and also preserve it for the posterity by putting it down in Staff notation. With the intention of making music a universal language, Chinnaswami Mudaliyar took great trouble to gather authentic versions of the compositions of Tyagaraja and Dikshitar, and transcribed them into western notation. He started a periodical, *Oriental Music in European Notation*, and a press named Ava Maria Press in Pudukottai, Madras. All this was at a time when printing was at its very infancy! His work was printed in the year 1893. It was a collection of sheets, sold at 1 anna per sheet. Chinnaswami Mudaliyar has already heard about Subbarama Dikshitar, and in 1893, he wrote to the Ettayapuram Maharaja to send Subbarama Dikshitar to Madras to tutor him. The response was positive, and thus started the lasting collaboration between these two luminaries. From 1894, the two corresponded in detail through the columns of *The Hindu*, and Chinnaswami's own *Oriental Music* publication. When they both

finally met at a later date, Dikshitar convinced him that it was impossible to sing the krtis without knowing the *gamakas*. After some initial reservation, Mudaliyar finally agreed and accepted Subbarama Dikshitar as his guru, and learned the *raganga* system from him. The two worked hard to create some complicated *gamaka* symbols and Mudaliyar made typesetting fonts of each of them. This was the time when Mudaliyar retired, and his eyesight was failing. Also, he was exhausted and his money drained out.

The genesis of the 1904 Telugu SSP

In 1899, he was invited to the coronation of Jagadvira Rama Venkateswara Ettappa, and Mudaliyar used this golden opportunity to request the Maharaja that he should order Subbarama Dikshitar to complete a treatise in Telugu. He wanted the work to include the symbols for the *gamaka*, tala and *kalapramana*, and have it printed in the music printing press Vidya Vilasini, belonging to the court. At first, Subbarama Dikshitar was not willing to share his knowledge, which was a treasured family property. But, later, persuaded by Mudaliyar, and patronized by the Ettayapuram rulers, he yielded. The rulers lavished almost 10,000 rupees on this project. So, this grand-nephew of Muttusvami Dikshitar, undertook “to put down in writing and notation, everything that he knew, without hiding anything”. As per the command of the Maharaja, Subbarama Dikshitar started the project on December 19, 1901, and by December 1903, he completed the sections on “*Vaggeyakara Charitamu*”, and “*Sangita Lakshana Samgraham*” that supports the symbols of *gamakas* and *talas*. Finally, the entire work was completed on February 15, 1904, and the book was printed at Vidya Vilasini Press, Ettayapuram. Unfortunately, Chinnaswami Mudaliyar did not live to see the completion of this great work which he so dearly initiated Dikshitar to pursue. He passed away in 1901.

The contents of the 1904 SSP

Commencing with the appropriate salutation “*guruguhaya namah*”, the work is in two thick volumes totaling 1715 pages. The entire work is in chaste Telugu, but occasionally, we find songs in Tamil. The title, of course is in Sanskrit. We see the usage of English in the titles of certain compositions (honoring certain luminaries or rulers). In the opening page, there is a dedication to H. H. The Maharaja of Ettayapuram “as a token of the Esteem and Regards” in English. There are three prefaces to the work (i) by C. Nagojee Rau in English, (ii) by R. Srinivasa Iyengar, a Tamil Pandit at Raja High School, Ettayapuram, in Tamil, and (iii) by Subbarama Dikshitar in Telugu. In addition to these, there is a write up called *pada hrdaya*, which traces the steps that led to the publication, and gives a brief content of the work. There are four verses, *slaghya padyamu* (poems of praise) in different metres composed by T. S. Murugesudu, a Telugu Pandit from Tirucirapalli. These verses are in praise of the rulers, the book, and the author. This is followed by an errata sheet running to 38 pages. The main body of the work starts here, and the Table of Contents is placed under 12 headings as follows:

1. A well prepared alphabetical Index of songs
2. *Vaggeyakara Charitramu* – The Biographies of 77 composers

3. *Sangita Lakshana Prachina Paddhati* - The science of traditional music)
4. *Sangita Lakshana Samgrahamu* - A concise treatment of the theory of music)
5. An exhaustive tabular representation of *raganga*, *upanga*, *bhasanga ragas*
6. *Gamaka samjna niyama vidhana vivaranamu* - Elaboration of the rules of *gamakas*
7. *Tala kala pramana samjna niyama vidhana vivaranamu* - Elaboration of the rules and signs of *tala kalapramana*)
8. Methods to identify mistakes - Notes on likely pitfalls while singing, or playing the *vina*;
9. Main contents: *Raganga ragams* 1 to 22 (till *janyam* 4) - Here ends Volume I
10. *Raganga ragams* 22 (continued from *janyam* 5) till *raganga ragam* 72 - Volume II begins
11. *Anubandham A* - 16 lengthy monumental *ragamalikas*
12. *Anubandham B* - A collection of 55 rare compositions by various composers.

A work of precision and accuracy:

The vertical *swara-sahitya* alignment is executed everywhere with utmost care. The format of presentation of the *various raganga* and the *janya ragams* follows a uniform pattern. One can say that Subbarama Dikshitar was a pioneer in his conception of what in modern parlance are called content templates, formatting standards, naming conventions, uniformity of section headers and footers in a work published over a hundred years ago. His use of footnotes at the appropriate places, acknowledgement and citation of sources where he obtained his biography, a clear attribution for *vaggeyakara-s* whenever there is a case of composers composing tunes for someone else's words or vice-versa. These are but some of the things illustrative of his degree of professionalism, quality and ethics. The *chakra*, *mela* number, and the mnemonic phrases are listed at the commencement of each section. This is followed by the name of the particular *raga* with the specification of whether it is a *raganga* or a *janya* with the further classification as *bhasanga* or *upanga*. Immediately following this, a (*lakshana*) *sloka* by (Muḍḍu) Venkatamakhi is provided. Then comes the *arohana/avarohana* scales of the *raga*, referred to as "*murchana*", to indicate that they are not mere scales in the usual sense, but a way to understanding the melodic characteristics of the *ragas*. In the next paragraph, the *lakshana* details are provided by Subbarama Dikshitar. On the *lakshya* side, we first see a *gitam* by Venkatamakhi. This is followed by illustrative compositions in that *raga*, which invariably includes a one or two by his grand uncle Muttusvami Diksitar. While major *ragas* like Bhairavi and *Shankarabharanam* feature many important compositions, most others have just only one or two illustrative composition. Sometimes, there are *chauka varnams*, *prabandhams*, *padams*, and so on. Each section concludes with a well-knit *sanchari* (*swara* passages) composed by Subbarama Dikshitar himself in some specific *tala* structure. Due to limitations in printing, the various *avartanas* in each song are arranged in a continuous manner with the *danda* mark (| or ||) separating them (and not in separate vertical columns of equal length, that we are accustomed to in present day musical work).

Tamil/Kannada editions:

It was Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer who originally tossed the idea of bringing out a Tamil translation of *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini*. On behalf of the Music Academy, Dr V. Raghavan, the then secretary, obtained a Grant-in-aid from the Sangita Nataka Akademi to pursue this venture. Justice T. L. Venkatarama Iyer, and Mudikondan Venkatarama Iyer provided clarification and advice on Muttuswami Dikshitar's compositions and musical aspects respectively. Dr S. Ramanathan wrote the *lakshana* segment, while B. Rajam Ayyar did the *lakshya* part. The first volume (covering *mela* 1 to parts of *mela* 15) came out in 1961. Subsequent volumes - second (remaining material in *mela* 15 till part of *mela* 22), third (*mela* 22 to part of *mela* 28), third (*mela* 28 to parts of *mela* 29), and fourth (*mela* 29 till *mela* 65) came out in 1963, 1966, and 1977. Unfortunately, Dr V. Raghavan passed away in 1979 before the completion of the project. Finally T. S. Parthasarathy completed the fifth and final volume (covering *melas* 66 till 72, and included both Appendix A and B) in 1983. Many topics in the introductory portions, as well as the section on *Vaggeyakara Charitramu* were left out in this project. The Andhra Pradesh Sangita Nataka Akademi brought out a reprint in four volumes of this great work in Telugu, but did not include the two Appendices. Also, we are told that the first volume of the book, and the work, *Prathamabhyasa Pustakamu* (another book by Subbarama Dikshitar) were translated recently into Kannada by S. K. Ramachandra Rao and Anandarama Udupa, and published in Bangalore by the cultural organization, Ananya.

A note on the English SSP by Kiranavali Vidyasankar

Year 2004 marked the hundred years of the publication of the *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini*. One great music enthusiast, Vidya Jayaraman (who is an IT professional in Delaware), emailed another proactive music enthusiast Dr. P. P. Narayanaswami (a Math Professor in St. Johns, Newfoundland, Canada) after attempting a translation from the Tamil edition of the Music Academy. Dr. Narayanaswami, who had already done a considerable amount of work transliterating compositions for various websites like Carnatica.net, came up with the idea of using tabular structures in LaTeX programming and various associated packages, to typeset this work with all the *gamaka* symbols properly incorporated. Over the course of the next two years, they overcame several technical hurdles on typesetting and *gamaka* symbols, and the material from Vol 1 of the Tamil SSP was released on the internet for *rasikas* and the general public. The immediate response was very encouraging. Technical and scholarly inputs were given by Dr. N. Ramanathan, (Retired Professor, Department of Music, University of Madras) and Dr. R. S. Jayalakshmi. It was at this juncture that the authors determined that in the interests of accuracy, the changes made to the Tamil edition had to be undone, and the entire *Anubandam* was typed entirely from Telugu SSP.

Several volunteer proofreaders across the world joined in enthusiastically. Using modern features such as file-sharing, transfers and scanning, the material for proof-reading was divided easily, and the rest of the mammoth task was completed. The English SSP, as it stands today, is an excellent resource for music lovers and students, and the first of its kind. No other composer indeed had

someone of Subbarama Dikshitar's caliber to notate his works, and the authors of the English SSP have shown the same reverence and dedication to Subbarama Dikshitar's work, and thereby to Muttuswami Dikshitar himself. That they are constantly working on fine-tuning the online material only reflects their commitment to perfection. Also in progress is the incorporation of the errata section from the Telugu SSP, and the translation of the Introductory Musicological Sections. The renowned musicologist Prof. S. R. Janakiraman has kindly consented to provide his scholarly inputs and help with the translation of this section. These will be completed soon and made available online.

However, unlike Subbarama Dikshitar and ChinnaSwami Mudaliar who corresponded through the pages of *The Hindu* and managed to meet each other, the translators of the English SSP have not yet met each other in person, and have corresponded only via email and telephone!

The contents of the English SSP can be downloaded from the website <http://ibiblio.org/guruguha/ssp.htm> and are available free for non-commercial purposes. The authors can be contacted via email - Dr. P. P. Narayananswami (swami@mun.ca) & Vidya Jayaraman (vidyajay@gmail.com).

A new musical journey begins

Veena Kanumalla

This past November, I was given the wonderful opportunity to present Sri Muttuswami Dikshitar's renowned *Vara kritis* along with several other students of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasanakar. Kirana Akka, as we all affectionately call her, put in innumerable hours of her time to prepare us for the Composers Day event organized by the St. Tyagaraja Music Society of Buffalo, New York. Our group consisted of six students from two different cities - Sriranjani Srinivasan, Priyanka Dinakar, and I joined Shilpa Sridhar, Akshay Sridhar, and Sharaanya Pillai from Buffalo. Weekly group practices and lessons via Skype were only part of the preparation needed to deliver a high-quality performance for the audience of Buffalo. Learning these *kritis* required a great deal of effort and practice. The demanding ragas of SowraShtra, Asaveri, Surati, Nattaikurinji, Athana, Paras and Yadukulakambhoji were complimented with the equally challenging *Sapta Talas* (Dhruva, Matya, Rupaka, Jhampa, Triputa, Ata and Eka). During the course of learning and practicing these *kritis*, an exceptional amount of enthusiasm and Carnatic *gnyana* was developed due to the hard work put in to present at our full potential.

To the delight of Priyanka, Ranjani and I, we were taken out of school early on Friday, November 6th to endure the seven-hour car ride to Buffalo, New York. We were graciously received by Anuradha Aunty (Shilpa's mom) at their residence in Williamsville, located in the suburbs of Buffalo. Arriving at 8pm, we quickly ate dinner and practiced for the first time as a whole group. The next day, another practice was held at Shilpa's house for several hours. We dressed up for the performance and headed to the hall of the Hindu Cultural Society. The Composers Day agenda was much like the one that Sruti sponsors every year. First there was

individual singing by children and adults. We were all excited and nervous to discover that our performance was slotted where normally a main concert of a distinguished artist would be placed. The expectations were extremely high and we were very anxious to see whether we could meet the same standards that previous Composers Day artists had set. We were fortunate and honored to have very highly accomplished accompaniments on the mridangam and khanjira by Sri Raja Bala and Karthik Venkataraman respectively. Once the program started, the long hours of practice and the emphasis on perfection that Kirana Akka had drilled into us helped us carry the concert with complete confidence.

After all the accolades and words of appreciation from the audience, we went back to Shilpa's house to celebrate and party, only to be reminded of our upcoming Swarajati presentation for our own Sruti's Composers Day and the group practice scheduled for early morning the next day! This experience has inspired new goals and the way I approach them, and I know that there are a lot more masterpieces like the Vara kritis waiting to be learned. The musical journey for us is going to continue to require many hours of practice, visits to and performances in new places, collaborations with friends and artists, meeting new audiences and enjoying new experiences.

Veena is a freshman at the Wissahickon High School , Ambler PA and has been learning Carnatic vocal music for nearly eight years. She is a disciple of Kiranavali Vidyasankar and this is her sixth year of participation in Sruti's Thyagarja Aradhana celebrations.

CHENNAI MUSIC SEASON 2009/2010

The Chennai Music Season Kiranavali Vidyasankar

It has already been a few weeks since the Chennai music season wound up. Musicians are now getting ready for Ramanavami festivals and their annual pilgrimage to the US. However for the rasikas and musicians who just returned from Chennai, the music season is bound to linger just a little longer.

It has become increasingly hard to tell when exactly the season begins and ends, as it seems to have stretched both ways, into the months of November and January! Beginning from Carnatica's annual Bharat Sangeet Utsav and The Hindu's November fest, it spans at least two-and-a-half months, providing the rasikas of Chennai an experience, the value of which is arguable. However if enjoyment is the biggest factor in the worth of anything, the Season has provided an incredible amount of value over the years to a sizeable number of people visiting Chennai, and of late, even the non-visitors.

The season has been a part of my life since I came into this world. I guess I can count the number of years I have missed it in a single hand. For over three decades now, I've seen the various colours and dimensions of the season as musician and rasika. Though there are times when I feel a little jaded at the

thought of all the frenzied activity from a distance, the music itself dispels it like a whiff of fresh breeze.

That the season is the most unique of music festivals in the world is probably the most beaten-to-death discussion. However what still remains unquestionable is that as a musician, the season is the most important time of the year. No matter how many years one has performed and where, every musician aspires to do well during the Chennai season. Many weeks or even months of highly motivated preparation goes in as one gets ready for it. The reasons for this are many. This is the time when a musician is expected to perform the maximum number of performances within the shortest span of time, that too at some of the leading centres of Carnatic music. It is also the time when rasikas and organizers from all over the Carnatic world gather to assess artistes either openly or discreetly. For some musicians, it is the time when they are heard by the maximum number of people, and could well be a make-or-break time! A musician's calendar is so full that by the time one is done with the first performance, it is already time to think of the next one. There is little time for post-mortems, although that by itself provides much fodder to some avid fans!

As a rasika, this is again the time when one can listen to the maximum number of concerts within the shortest possible time. All day long concerts take place at every imaginable venue in the city of Chennai, and one can have one's pick from the veterans to the top-stars to the rising-on-the-horizon to the just-arrived. It is also the time for rasikas to catch up with their socializing and put their finery to good use! It is not uncommon for rasikas from different cities or even countries to form groups and attend concerts together. Undoubtedly this enhances the appeal of the season several notches as one can not only discuss one's favorites with passion, but also dismiss one's not-so-favorite with equal fervor!

My annual trip to Chennai is usually centered around the music season and last year was no exception. I left around mid-November, well ahead of the core season and stayed till the activity had completely died down. Even though my concerts are uppermost in my mind, I do make time to listen to other musicians every year. The general thumb rule I follow for listening is to try and catch the veterans first and then those youngsters about whom I have heard a lot during the year.

This past season, it so happened that my performances and listening started on the same day. I started off my performances at the Narada Gana Sabha on Dec 15th and that very evening, I attended the inaugural concert of Sri. T N Seshagopalan at the Music Academy. The acoustics at the Academy, of which I had heard much in the last two years, was noticeably different with all the Bose speakers. Sri. Seshagopalan's concert was memorable and educative for the fact that even with a not-so-great voice, he provided a grand and awe-inspiring experience. His vidwat and presentation skills are undoubtedly at a level that would challenge even the best of vidwans, and that day's concert only drove home that fact a little stronger! Whether it was the Kalyani Varnam or the neraval in *Marivere* (Shanmukhapriya) or the alapana of Kambhoji or the *kanakku swara*-s in *Srisubramanyaya namaste*, he presented them in a kingly manner as to reiterate his superior excellence in

every aspect of music. I also subsequently heard him in two other concerts - Carnatica and more recently, at Sunaadam Trust's annual festival - and came away feeling overjoyed at having heard him in great form.

A few days later, at the Music Academy, I also heard the concerts of Smt. Parassala Ponnammal and Sri. Nedunuri Krishnamurthy. The concert of the former was a good one, but I had to solve the dilemma of missing another concert that I equally looked forward to, which was that of Sri. R K Srikanthan accompanied by *Chitravina* Ravikiran, Sri. Umayalpuram Sivaraman and Ghatam Karthik. I was happy with the choice I made as Sri. Srikanthan (who just turned 90 a few weeks ago) gave a lovely performance in the company of his highly accomplished team. I also particularly noticed and enjoyed the vocal support he received from his son Ramakanth. Even though Srikanthan's voice was so strong that he would have put any youngster to shame, Ramakanth's support definitely added value to the concert. The restrained support of Chitravina Ravikiran brought another charming dimension to the music, while Sivaraman's brilliant mridangam strokes received matching replies from Ghatam Karthik.

I made up for missing Smt. Ponnammal's full concert at the Academy by attending her concert at Naada Inbam. In my opinion, this concert turned out to be even better than the one at Academy and showed her in fine form. One of the best surprises of this concert was her choice to sing Shyama Shastri's Todi swarajati, *Ravehimagiri*, right after the main piece *Etavunnara* in Kalyani! The audience at the lovely Raga Sudha Hall seemed to be equally moved by this choice going by the liberal "Oohs" and "Aahs" that one heard.

I managed to hear *Chitravina* Ravikiran at his Music Academy concert, which was another wonderful learning experience in that it showcased the fine balance he has achieved at the artistic and professional levels. I also heard the Carnatica Brothers (Shashikiran and Ganesh) in a couple of concerts - Music Academy and Karthik Fine Arts. Though both concerts were well-delivered and received acclaim, I liked the latter performance a tad more.

Veteran Smt. Vyjayantimala Bali's Bharatanatyam performance at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha was another inspiring experience. Her perfect postures belied her age as did her quickness of mind, her attention to detail, and quest for perfection. As a very accomplished singer herself, her involvement in her orchestra was quite beyond the normal standards, and she often incorporated it into the dance itself. That was especially very refreshing and brought in an element of spontaneity which one doesn't associate with this art-form anymore.

I also witnessed Smt. Gowri Ramnarayan's production called *Peacock Blue* featuring the dancers Sheejith Krishna and Anjana Anand. While the dance was very pleasing, I particularly enjoyed the passionate, expressive introductions to each piece by Smt. Gowri and the excellent singing by Gayatri Venkataraghavan.

The Music Academy's dance festival featured, among many top-class artistes, a dancer whom I had long been hoping to watch - Nartaki Nataraj. Barring an occasional slip, Nartaki delivered a near-perfect program, laying emphasis on the

emotional content of the program rather than mere display of virtuosity, and in the process proved herself to be a secure and mature artiste. She along with her art seemed to grow on the beholder even as the program progressed. I was also very pleased to find that she was a rather strict adherent of the traditional *margam*. Her *abhinaya* skills were exceptional.

Coming to my own performances, I think I had a pretty good season both in terms of my own artistic growth and professional success. I was visiting Chennai after a 2-year hiatus and with my added responsibilities as a mother, I was definitely a little apprehensive about how things would turn out. I had of course worked very hard on every area of my music, even though I had to contend with major changes in my life. It was therefore very gratifying when most of the people who heard me commented on how much nicer my voice sounded, and how much I had improved in my delivery of the creative aspects. I especially value that my musically astute brothers, who are also my sincerest well-wishers and therefore my strongest critics, praised the planning and delivery of my Narada Gana Sabha concert. My Todi alapana at the Brahma Gana Sabha also received much praise. Although I had conservatively accepted only a handful of concerts this year, the organizations which found out that I was in Chennai during the season, chided me for not informing them that I would be there. I look at that as an extremely positive sign. The audience attendance for my concerts grew with each concert, and I also got plenty of media coverage for every concert and thereafter. All these made me ponder once again the question of whether I should move back to Chennai!

You may all wonder if one could possibly have so much fun in a single trip! Well, don't be jealous when I tell you that I saved the best for the last, which were the two concerts of Sri. Nedunuri Krishnamurthy. I already mentioned that I attended his Music Academy concert, which was actually his 55th consecutive performance at that esteemed venue. What an absolutely stunning experience that was! At 80-plus, he sang delightfully well, in his characteristically gentle style, fully bringing the raga bhava in every swara and every phrase. His breath control was nothing short of breathtaking! He was able to sing long phrases during raga alapanas in a variety of speeds with perfect ease. His kalpanaswara singing style has always been one of my favorites, and he proved once again how he is a master of single-avartana rounds. The ragas he elaborated were Purvikalyani (*Paraloka sadhaname*) and Yadukulakambhoji (*Adigadu bhajana*). I felt at that time that it didn't matter how great musicians like him or Sri. Seshagopalan planned their concerts or what they sang. They are able to draw the audience with the sheer power of their musicality, that even mentioning technical aspects such as concert proportion, raga/tala contrast appear silly. Not that they do not adhere to these conventions, but these things nevertheless recede into the background, and one is taken to an altogether different world of wonder. Sri. Nedunuri was well supported vocally by the Malladi brothers, and I was very thrilled to see the veteran Sri. Trichy Sankaran on the mridangam. The best lesson in this combination was how Sri. Sankaran had no eyes or ears for anything else around him but Sri. Nedunuri's music. He was the very picture of attention, even during the long raga alapana sessions. His Tani Avartanam was another delectable treat.

A few days after the Music Academy concert Sri. Nedunuri performed for Carnatica's Samarpanam festival. It was more of a lecture-concert, where he had to speak about "Raga Rasa". Here he was accompanied by Sri. Ravikiran on the Chitravina and Sri. K V Prasad on the mridangam. The hall was overflowing and there were many students and musicians in attendance. Sri. Nedunuri took up major ragas like Todi, Shankarabharanam and Kambhoji, and illustrated how one builds up the raga alapana or creates swara patterns for these. He also liberally shared his vast experience on learning and practise methods, emphasising particularly on the need for correct methods of training and listening. His delivery was once again gentle and laced with humour, but nevertheless powerful in its content. I went home feeling elated and thankful for these great masters whose times we luckily live in!

*About the author: **KiranaVali Vidyasankar** is a Carnatic vocalist, Chitravina artist, writer and teacher. At age 2, she was able to identify over 200 ragas, demonstrate the 175 talas, answer numerous other technical questions pertaining to Carnatic music, and was hailed a child prodigy. She is the grand-daughter of the famous Gottuvadyam Narayana Iyengar and has studied with three distinguished musicians-- her father Chitravina Narasimhan, her brother Chitravina Ravikiran, and the late T. Brinda.*

A Musical New Year

- Sanjay Narayanan

On the night of December 31st 2009, I had a unique experience. Our family had just finished dinner in Chennai. I was quite disappointed that we weren't going to do anything to signify the coming of the New Year. This being India, here they didn't celebrate like we do in the United States. In the US, there are parties with lots of people and a TV. They watch the New Year's Eve Ball slowly drop from a flagpole in Times Square, clink their glasses of champagne together, drink it down, and party. "The modern celebration during New Year's Eve in India is a little similar", said my brother, Viraj, who went to Bombay to visit friends to celebrate the New Year. But the rest of the family didn't have anywhere to go for the occasion. In addition, my sister Shoba, who had performances coming up in a few days, was feeling sick and someone would have to be with her. Nobody else in my family really cared venturing out late in the night, especially since we had been at concerts and performances all day long. I was quite bummed at the fact of not commemorating the New Year, but I couldn't do anything. This is why I was very excited when I heard that there would be a celebration at the Music Academy that night.



After a few minutes of cajoling, my dad agreed to accompany me to the Music Academy while my mom stayed home to take care of my sister. We climbed into an auto-rickshaw, and set off for our destination. The rickshaw dropped us right outside the building and we entered the auditorium. Music immediately reached

our ears as the doors opened. We quickly scanned for some empty seats, and sat down because the auditorium was already pretty full. The comfortable chairs made it hard to not doze off. I soon realized, to my surprise, I was seated very near my guru, Kiranavali Akka. I waved, happy to see somebody I knew here.

Many artists performed numerous songs. There was a raga identification contest that the audience participated in, and besides, the entire auditorium was keeping perfect talam. There were interesting role reversals on stage. For example, an instrumentalist would sing and a vocalist would play an instrument. Another



program featured some highly talented kids perfectly executing well-known movie songs in popular Carnatic ragas. Everyone was in a cheerful mood. Just as the new year chimed in, violinist R K Sriramkumar sang *Srinathadi guruguho*, a Dikshitar kriti in Mayamalavagowla. After the performances, *panakam*, which I call the non-alcoholic Indian champagne, and other festive foods were given out outside the auditorium. Panakam was a lot tastier than the sparkling cider that I would get in the US. I did not miss the clinking of the glasses with sparkling cider and totally relished the panakam in small dainty cups. There couldn't have been a better way to spend the New Year.

On our way back home, we saw many young people celebrating all over the city. The streets were decorated with colorful lights, and there was music playing everywhere. It was truly an unforgettable night. When we got home, I fell on my bed and went to sleep, promising my mom I would tell her all about it tomorrow. She is finally going to read about it here.

I really recommend to anyone going to India around the New Year to go to the Music Academy on New Year's Eve. It really is an interesting and enjoyable experience.

Sanjay Narayanan is an eighth grader at the Radnor Middle School. He is a student of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar in Carnatic Music. Sanjay plays both Jazz and Carnatic music on the saxophone. He enjoys reading and serves on the student council at his school. His other passions include automobiles, tennis, paint balling, skiing, video games, debating, sleepovers and gourmet foods.

My impressions of the Chennai Music Season-2009

By a Sruti Member

The Madras Music Academy Celebrated its 83rd Annual Conference and concerts from Dec 15th 2009 to January 1st 2010. This year the academy honored the renowned thavil maestro Valayapatti Subramanian with the traditional title of Sangita Kalanidhi considered to be the most prestigious award that any musician

can aspire for. This is the first time ever the academy has bestowed this honor on a thavil vidwan.

Most rasikas will probably agree with me that the Madras Music Academy can be considered as the epi-center of music concert venues. Performing here may be equivalent to taking the stage at Carnegie Hall in Manhattan!!! The Academy, as we all know, is located in the heart of the city. The ambiance is great. After renovation, the acoustics are by far the best in the city and it can seat probably close to 1500-2000 people. I also came to know that the Madras Music Festival is the largest of its kind in the world where, in a span of 30 days, over 2400 concerts are given at different venues. Shri N. Murali who took over as the President of the academy a few years ago conducts this prestigious event very successfully with the help of his committee members. The academy arranged a total of 84 concerts this year. There are five concerts a day. The three concerts, held in the early morning to early afternoon period, are open to the public. The 4:15 concert is the first ticketed event of the evening followed by the 7:00 pm concert which ends at 9:30 pm. Most senior artists take the stage at 4:15 or at 700pm.

Apart from these early morning concerts, the lec-dems, usually with a theme, that take place at the adjoining mini hall from 8:00am to 10:00 am are a source of great knowledge for the serious student of music and the inquisitive rasikas. These are also open to the public. Many eminent musicians give these lecture demonstrations. It is here that one realizes that music is just not the concert event, though that is its final form, but there is an ocean of knowledge, nuance and disputes behind it. I attended the concerts from the 25th morning until the 1st of January in the Academy. Whether it is good food, or book or great music, it is not too much of a generalization to say that it is enjoyed much better in the company of similar minded friends. This is certainly part of the overall ambiance of the music season – the gossip as it were, that is seriously indulged in, as one sips cup of excellent filter coffee at the cafeteria next to the various sabhas. I was in no way denied this joy since many of the rasikas from NJ were also there.

It is virtually impossible to comment on all the great concerts at the Academy. One can only hope to touch on some highlights, which is not to admit that those not mentioned here were not worthy of note. On Christmas morning Prof TN Krishnan was giving a violin concert along with his daughter Viji Krishnan. He played the Sri Raga pancharatnam and also the Swarajathi Amba kamakshi. Sangita kalanidhi TNK is a seasoned performer who has accompanied many stalwarts of yester years and is now giving mostly solo performances. I heard that Smt Parassala Ponnammal was singing in Nada Inbam the same morning. Sometimes choosing a concert to attend could become a real challenge!!! It is similar to being asked to choose between pongal and bisi bele huli anna. Smt Ponnammal who gave a concert for Sruti last year sings so effortlessly and so enthusiastically. She has such a good voice and if she can perform like this in her 80s I can imagine how well she sang during her younger days. I also had the opportunity of listening to veteran artists like Sangita Kalanidhi Smt Vedavalli who took the stage for her morning concert at the academy on the 27th Sunday morning. It was pristine music from start to finish. Her entire concert of two hours

and a half was pure music devoid of any gimmicks. An enjoyable morning concert.

Among the other “attractions” at the Academy, the cafeteria and the CD vendors in the lobby have to be mentioned. Whether it is breakfast or lunch, the excellent meals served at the cafeteria (remembering not to drink the water!) is a nice thought to entertain as one follows the intricacies of Kalyani inside the concert hall. There is good food after the concert within walking distance! The music related ware in the lobby, discounted because of the season, is a great temptation to load up on more

I also listened to the concerts of Aruna Sayeeram, Sudha Raghunathan, Bombay Jayashri, Gayathri Venkataraghavan. Aruna Sayeerams concert was sold out . The academy sells a minimum number of daily tickets which are sold out in minutes especially for popular singers. Aruna sayeeram’s RTP in Thodi was very well received by the audience. She dedicated the pallavi in the name of GNB whose centenary is being observed this year. Aruna got a standing ovation after the concert. Sudha Raghunathan sang a nava raga pallavi in the raga Hindolam which was much appreciated by everyone. The two and a half hour format in my opinion somewhat restricts the ability of an artist to give off his or her best, resulting in 20 min RTP’s. However, I noticed senior artists like T. M. Krishna sang an RTP in the raga Nattaikurinji for nearly an hour and a half including a fantastic thani avaradhanam by Karakudi Mani on the mridangam and Bangalore Amit on the kanjeera. TMK drew repeated and thunderous applause during his thanam and swara singing. This concert was also very well attended and was a treat indeed. Smt. Bombay Jayashri gave a solid performance on 28th Monday at the first afternoon concert. She was accompanied on the violin by Embar kannan who ably assisted Jayashri and he also played the violin the day before for Sudha Raghunathan.

Another concert that was very absorbing from start to finish was that by Sri. Sanjay Subrahmanyam,. He had the accompaniment of Sri Nagai Muralidharan on the Violin and Sri Mannargudi Easwaran on the mridangam. Sanjay gave the 7:00 pm concert on Wednesday the 30th and his RTP in Kalyanavasantham was sung very well with interesting swara exchanges between Sanjay and Nagai who probably gave one of the best violin performances at the academy. Musicians like Sanjay and TM Krishna never disappoint the rasikas and their concerts in all venues are very well attended. The last concert by TMK was a marathon four hour concert at Kalarasana in the company of Sri R. K. Sriramkumar on the violin and Sri Trichy Sankaran on the Mridangam and Sri Purushothaman on the kanjeera. This was one more event with standing room only.

One of the best concerts I listened to was at the Krishna Gana Sabha by the 90 year old Sangita Kalanidhi Sri R. K. Srikantan. Vocal support was provided by his son Sri Ramakanth. Sri Ravikiran played the chitraveena, with Sangita kalanidhi Sri Umayalpuram Shivaraman on the mridangam and Sri Karthik on the ghatam. From beginning to end, it was soul stirring music for two and a half hrs on that Saturday afternoon. Whether it was the Kedaragowla Varnam or the

Saramathi alapana followed by the song Sarasa Dhala Nayane Amba Sharadhe , the Saveri alapana and the song Thulasijaganani, Srikantan sang from the heart and it touched everyone's in the auditorium. The accompanying artists were nodding their heads frequently and it looked as though it was a sheer joy and privilege for them to play for this maestro. An unforgettable concert indeed but there were less than 100 people in the auditorium, but that did not deter Sri Srikantan who sang like a teenager!! The academy also arranges a dance festival every year after the conclusion of the music festival. Chennai season is an experience. If you haven't been there I strongly recommend you go and it will become an addiction, and there is nothing wrong with it. As a former Governor of Madras Sri K. K. Shah observed in one of his speeches at the Academy "Music is Communion with GOD" How true it is!!!!

Editor's note: We are grateful to the "Sruti Member" who took the time to write down his thoughts in response to a request from another member of the community.

Margazhi Maha Utsavam on Jaya TV

Priyanka Dinakar

During the month of December, Jaya TV telecasts the Margazhi Maha Utsavam, which has now become an annual festival ushering in the Chennai music season. I was lucky to be able to listen to many great musicians sing some classic songs in this festival. Everyday (except for Sunday), I would be waiting impatiently until 6pm to listen to the spectacular music that was about to engulf the whole house. My family was so into the music that whenever we could not be there to listen to the telecast, we would DVR it so we could catch up with it the next day.

Some of my favorite concerts included those of Unnikrishnan, Vijay Siva, and S Sowmya. Even though Sanjay Subrahmanyam is one of my favorite singers, I felt that this particular concert was not one of his best due to a sore throat.

One of the highlights of Unnikrishnan's concerts was *Krishna nee begane* in Yamunakalyani and coincidentally, T M Krishna happened to be focused on by the camera while seated in the audience! I cannot wait for Unnikrishnan's Sruti concert coming up in spring.

S Sowmya's theme for her concert was "Ragas used in folk and Carnatic music". She started out singing *Manasaguruha* in Anandabhairavi. This is one of my personal favorites because I was introduced to it at the Sruti concert presented by Smt. Parassala Ponnammal last year. Therefore, it was a wonderful treat to hear it rendered beautifully again. After that, she also sang a folk song in Anandabhairavi to show that this raga can be used in folk songs. She sang the first line of *Ksheerasagara* in the same raga to show some beautiful shades of the notes in Anandabhairavi that are not normally incorporated in most songs. She also mentioned that Begada and Reetigowla can never be used for folk songs because of their gamakams. An instrument looking like an upturned ghatam, with a board at the mouth, was used for the folk songs making a sound like an *uddukai*. It added an interesting uplift to the folk pieces.

One of the songs Vijay Siva sang was the Navagraha kriti *Srisukra* in raga Paras. The style was a bit different from how I learned it but I still relished the challenging sangatis. He also sang *Guruleka etuvanti* in Gowrimanohari with kalpanaswaras, which brought out the flavor of Gowrimanohari.

One of the first concerts of the Margazhi Mahotsav was the Malladi Brothers. Their theme was the first songs of different composers. They sang Muttuswami Dikshitar's *Srinathadi* in raga Mayamalavagowla and *Balakanakamaya* in raga Atana to showcase Tyagaraja.

If you missed the wonderful concerts, I recommend going to Youtube and watching snippets of the concerts there. I assure you that you will enjoy them too. Imagine how good it would have been if you were watching these concerts in person!

Priyanka is a 7th grader at The Wyndcroft School. She learns Carnatic music from Kiranavali Vidyasankar.

A GRAND G.N.B CENTENARY IN TEXAS

V.S. Kaushik, Austin-Texas

Editor's note: We received the following report on the G.N.B Centenary celebration from Austin Texas.



This year 2010 marks the 100th birth anniversary of Gudalur Narayanaswami Balasubramaniam (GNB 1910-1965) that is being celebrated all over the world to commemorate the memory of this great singer composer. A year-long GNB centenary celebration just concluded in Chennai earlier this month. The city of Austin in Texas hosted the first GNB centenary program in the Americas. This year the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana is also dedicated to GNB.

The GNB Day sponsored by the Austin Hindu Temple 9801 Decker Lake Rd., Austin Texas, 78724 was held in Texas on the 30th of January, organized by the Austin Thyagaraja Aradhana Group (ATAG). It was a divine warm-hearted Texas tribute with a wide range of GNB kritis and presentations to remember this great 20th century composer.

The program commenced with the welcome speech By Smt. Chandreka Kaushik and an introductory power point presentation on GNB by Sri Rohit Dhamankar that showcased the life and achievements of GNB. This was followed by group renditions of Karimukha Varada, Hamsanandi Tillana, Sadapalaya, and Kamalacharane, compositions of GNB rendered by the ATAG group consisting of Bhamathi Sudarshan, Kanthimathi Sathasivan, Lakshmi Samudrala, Prasad Vishnubhotla, Chandreka Kaushik, Kalyani Vishnubhotla, Ramani Vishnubhotla, Vidhya Satish, Shanti Aradhyula, Swati Dokka and Rohini Puttabasavaiah, with able support by Balaji Narasimhan and Suriya Subramanian on the Mrudangam and Harish Ganapathy on Violin. The program continued with further renditions by individual singing, instrumental Veena and Violin renditions to excellent selection of GNB songs. This was followed by mini- concerts by Vishaal Sapuram and Aditya Kanukurthy.

What was interesting to note was the large number of teen-age participation that showed that GNB Kritis are also very popular among the younger generation. The selection of kritis spanned the popular *Nee padame gati*, *Ranjani Niranjani*, *Samagana Iole*, *Paranmukha melanamma*, *Saraswati* and the not so often heard *Mamakuleshwaram*, *Kuvalayakshi Varnam*, *Marakoti sundari*, *Unnadiye gati*, *Ni Samanamevaru*, *Nee charanambujamulu*, *Gati verevaramma*, and the rare ragas like Sarangatarangini (Samanarahite), VandanaDarini (Sudhamadhurya), and Amritabehag (Kamalacharane), all discovered by GNB.

Smt Kalyani Vishnubhotla was the master of ceremonies and Smt Vidhya Satish did the Vote of thanks and the event concluded with the Temple Aarti and blessings.

The program was well attended by Texas rasikas. A Souvenir was compiled by Smt Lakshmi Samudrala, giving details of the event along with the songs presented in English, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu and Devanagari. Snacks were served as part of the fund-raising.

Due to seasonal considerations, Thyagaraja Aradhanas and this year GNB centenary celebrations in America usually take place later in March-April time frame. But Austin completed its GNB day in January with rasikas support despite the unusually cold weather. The program was free and entirely open to the public sustaining itself only on voluntary donations.

News and Notes:

The second edition of the “Festival of Sacred Music” was held in a number of venues in the Tanjavur area on 26, 27 and 28 February. The festival is the brain child of Ranvir Shah and the Prakriti Foundation. This year the concerts included Vidya Rao’s presentation of Thumri-Dadra, a jugalbandi by Pandit Krishna Ram Choudary (Shennai) and Pinnai Managar Dhakshinamurthi with K.M Uthirapathi (Nadaswaram) and a Vocal Concert by Aruna Sairam

Spring 2010 Concert Series.....

Saturday March 13 2010

Thyagaraja Aradhana

South Indian Classical Vocal Concert: **Salem Shriram**

Saturday March 27 2010

Odissi Style Indian Classical Dance:

The Nrityagram Dance Ensemble

Saturday April 17 2010

South Indian Classical Vocal Concert: **P. Unnikrishnan**

Saturday May 15 2010

Special D.K. Pattamal Memorial Concert

South Indian Classical Vocal Concert: **Vijay Siva**

Saturday June 5 2010

South Indian Classical Instrumental Concert- Veena :

Nirmala Rajasekar

Fall 2010 Concert Series.....

Saturday September 18 2010

South Indian Classical Instrumental Concert- Violin Duo:

L. Subramaniam & Ambi Subramaniam

Saturday October 9 2010

Bharatanatyam Style Indian Classical Dance:

Shijith Nambiar & Parvati Menon

Saturday October 23 2010

North Indian Classical Vocal Concert:

Veena Sahasrabudde

Saturday November 13 2010

South Indian Classical Vocal Concert: **Malladi Brothers**

Saturday December 11 2010

Composer's Day & General Body Meeting

