

The Nightingale of Andhra Pradesh
Carnatic Vocal Concert (September 15, 2018)
A Review 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.



L-R: Kotipalli Ramesh, Pantula Rama, MSN Murthy

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 hEmavatl (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.