

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

A Violin Viola Duet (September 29, 2018)

A Review 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 “Akhilandeshwari” 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-pallavIs (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!

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