

An evening of traditional Carnatic "chamber music"

Rudrapatnam Thyagarajan and Tharanathan, a vocalist duo from Karnataka gave a concert arranged by SRUTI at the Berlin Temple in NJ on June 1, 1991. They were accompanied by Mysore Nagaraj on the violin and Bangalore Praveen on the mridangam. The accompanists gave excellent support throughout the concert, and the perfect violin sruti was especially noticeable right from the start.

The Rudrapatnam Brothers, as they are often called, began the concert with a varnam in Kalyani - *Vanajakshi* in Ata tala. The second song was in the raga Nata - *Sarasiruhaasana priye amba*. The first two items were fast-paced and energetic, though the mridangam could have been a bit more mellow. Next they sang Thyagaraja's kriti in the raga Dhenuka - *Teliyaleru Rama*. I was a bit surprised to hear them say *Teliyaledu* in certain passages. The tempo was moderately slow, which was quite suitable for the tone of that song.

Following the old traditional style employed in Carnatic music, they next sang a prathi madhyama raga - Simhendra Madhyama. The kriti was *Rama Rama Gunaseema* composed by Maharaja Swati Tirunal. Both the vocal alapana as well as the violin solo were excellent and demonstrated the high as well as the low range of swaras admirably. The kriti was also rendered well, however, I felt that the gandhara could have been emphasized a little more.

The main (and the longest) piece of the evening was Thyagaraja's kriti - *Enthanerchina*. The artists announced the raga as Udaya Ravichandrika. Some of us might recognize it as Shuddha Dhanyasi. Both names are used for the same raga. This raga provides ample scope for the rendering of musical phrases full of bhava, due to its inherent melodic nature. The alapana was handled masterfully by both the vocalists. The violin solo was again superb. Mysore Nagaraj demonstrated his dexterity and

nimbleness with the instrument during his alapana. It was indeed a treat to hear him again - the last time he was in the US was on a concert tour with T.V. Shankaranarayanan some years ago.

Mayamma Ma Brovavamma - a rare composition of Shyama Sastri in the raga Natakuranji - a pleasing rakthi raga, was another piece sung ably by the artists. The word *Ma* seemed prominent throughout this kriti - perhaps a coincidence, or perhaps by the composer's design - Madhyama being an important note in this raga. Shyama Sastri was a great devotee of Amba, and quite a large number of his compositions are in praise of Kamakshi. Though the lyrics in many of his kritis are in simple Telugu, there is a special place for the word(s) "Mayamma". In the compositions where this word appears, a special, extraordinary mother-son relationship appears to have been depicted. Another example is the kriti in Ahiri raga - "Mayamma Anine", a song rendered beautifully by D.K. Jayaraman during his last US concert tour.

The other songs sung by the artists included *Shree Thyagarajaya Namaste* by Muthuswami Dikshitar in Begada raga, *Seetavara Sangeeta Gyanamu* in Devagandhari raga by Thyagaraja, *Adaddella* in Poorvi Kalyani by Purandara Dasa and *Madhura Madhura* in Atana by Uthukadu Venkatasubbayyar. The artists are well-known for their rendering of the above composer's songs.

The temple atmosphere was quite conducive to a chamber music concert variety. The artists had a good rapport with the audience. On the whole, it was an enjoyable evening and the Rudrapatnam brothers, though lacking in brilliance, gave a good performance.

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