

Master Shashank's flute concert

By
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This was an excellent concert by Master Shashank at the Drexel University in October 1996. Shashank began the concert with Bhairavi varnam followed by a brilliant rendering of *Vaathapiganapathim Bhaje* in Hamsadhvani, characterized by an energetic swaraprasthara. After a brief delineation in Dhenuka, Shashank demonstrated his creativity and mastery over flute in his rendering of Ragam Thana Pallavi in Abheri, followed by Raagamalika swaraprasthara. Shashank then played *Devibrova* in Chinthamani (K.V. Narayanaswamy's favorite) - a Shyamashastra composition. Shashank then played *Jo Bhaje* in Sindhubhairavi, *Krishnaneebeganebaaro* in Yaman Kalyani, followed by a short tune in raaga Peeloo. Shashank's melodious re-rendering of *Chinnakkiri* in Raagamalika reminded us all of the flute maestro Mali and that great music can be very simple. Shashank was ably accompanied on the violin by Gopinath, mrudangam by Satishkumar and Ghatam by Tripunithira Radhakrishnan.

Master Shashank, like other child prodigies started performing at an early age of nine. He has since performed all over the world. His amazing skills have put him years ahead of his age. His main influence has

been his father, Mr. Subramaniam, who also plays on the flute. He also received training in vocal music from Sangeetha kalanidi K.V. Narayanaswamy. Flute, unlike other instruments, presents a unique limitation on the playable musical scale (from mandara rishabha to tara panchama). The western flute is architected to stretch the normal scale playable on an 8-hole bamboo flute but still suffers from this limitation. A flutist overcomes this limitation by switching to flutes of madhyama shruthi when playing in the extreme high (tara sthayi) or low scale (mandara sthayi). This technique, pioneered by accomplished flutists like Dr. Ramani and Hariprasad Chaurasia demands not just a quick adaptation to flutes of different lengths, but requires a great tonal sense. Shashank has mastered this technique and plays with considerable ease. The bamboo flute - known for its melody is also one of several carnatic instruments that lends to playing fast. While playing fast is demonstrative of energy and dexterity, it often robs music of its melody - something for Shashank and other flutists to watch for.

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