

## Review of 1994 SRUTI Concerts

An Evening with T.V. Sankaranarayanan  
September 10, 1994

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1994 seemed to be SRUTI's year to honor Madurai Mani Iyer. After starting the year's activities with the Thyagaraja aradhana concert by T.N. Bala, senior disciple of Mani Iyer, SRUTI hosted in November a vocal concert by T.V. Sankaranarayanan (TVS), the foremost disciple and nephew of the great vocalist. The concert tour of TVS was sponsored by a foundation set up in honor of Sri Madurai Mani Iyer by one of his ardent fans. TVS was accompanied on the violin by Ramanujacharyulu and Hari Kumar on the mridangam.

TVS started the concert with the kriti *Sri Ganapathini* (in *Sourashtra*) -- students of Mani Iyer do not begin with a varnam. This was followed by the kriti *Sogasu juda tharama* (in *Kannada Gowla*). TVS's rendering of the kriti *Bhuvaneswariye nene manasave* in *Mohana-Kalyani* was highly emotional and romantic. During a conversation with TVS on our way to the airport, he mentioned to me that he rendered the kriti with more emphasis on romance, which is different from the traditional way his guru (and uncle) Mani Iyer used to render. It is interesting to note that this song, popularized by Madurai Mani Iyer, was composed by his (Mani Iyer's) guru Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar. I have heard an audio recording (from AIR) of this kriti sung by Mani Iyer accompanied by no less than the genius Lalgudi Jayaraman. During his visit in 1993, Lalgudi was reminiscing the good old times when he used to accompany Mani Iyer and made special mention to this song. This prompted me to request TVS to render this song during his concert. I am very glad that he honored the request and rendered the song very beautifully. The beauty of the raga *Mohana-Kalyani* is that it has the notes of *Mohanam* in the arohana and notes of *Kalyani* for the avarohana (S R G P D S; S N D P M G R S). Thus the raga features the romantic aspects of *Mohanam* and the beautiful sentiments of *Kalyani*. TVS illuminated these aspects while rendering the kriti, handling the swaraprasthara very skillfully.

After a crisp rendering of Purandara Dasa's kriti *Barayya Venkataramana* in *Saveri*, TVS gave a scintillating performance of Thyagaraja's *Chakkani rajamargamu* in *Kharaharapriya*. Being a janaka raga, *Kharaharapriya* offers a lot of scope for elaboration and improvisation for an experienced musician. TVS demonstrated his innovative skills, imagination and extraordinary flair for raga alapana in *Kharaharapriya*. The rendering of the kriti itself demonstrated the maturity and the depth of knowledge of

TVS. He built the tempo of the song step by step offering a lively challenge to the accompanists which they readily answered. Ramanujacharyulu's accompaniment was brilliant and Hari Kumar gave the best support on the mridangam and a great thani avarthanam.

For raga, tanam and pallavi (RTP) TVS chose the raga *Hamsanadam*. After an impressive rendering of raga and tanam, TVS rendered the pallavi "*Saravana Bhava Guhane, Swaminathane!*" set to *Adi tala*. After the concert was over, TVS told me that this pallavi was composed extempore for the evening! The neraval at *Swaminathane* was very innovative. After a beautiful swaraprasthara in *Hamsanadam*, he rendered *Misra Sivaranjani* and *Sahana* before concluding RTP.

TVS rendered a pasuram from Nalayira Divya Prabandam, *pachai ma malai pol meni* (composed by Thondaradi Podi Azhvar) in *Kapi*, followed by *Enna Thavam Seithani Yasoda* in the same raga. The concert was concluded after rendering the song *Parukulle Nalla Nadu* (composed by Subramanya Bharathi) in *Jonpuri*.

Ramanujacharyulu's violin accompaniment was faultless and traditional. He never tried to play something which the main artist did not perform. His over all accompaniment, especially solo on *Kharaharapriya* was remarkable. He has an excellent sense of shruti and great bowing technique. He is a staff artist (A grade) of AIR Tiruchy. He currently resides at Srirangam, Tamil Nadu.

It was a great pleasure to listen to Hari Kumar's mridangam. His solo after *Kharaharapriya* was excellent. Without his excellent support the concert would not have been as successful. He is also a staff artist of AIR Tiruchy. He has a great future. He is a neighbor to Ramanujacharyulu.

As mentioned earlier, Mani Iyer and his disciples do not begin the concert with a varnam. They also do not render any thillana before concluding the concert. I do not know of any convention that dictates a carnatic music concert should start with a varnam, and end with a thillana. I would invite any body who is very knowledgeable about this to shed some light on this topic.

It was very disappointing to see that the attendance for the concert was very thin due to clash with other cultural programs scheduled for the same day. It might be worthwhile, in the future, for SRUTI to coordinate the dates with other sister organizations. It was also very annoying to notice that the sound system was not up to the level throughout the concert. Kudos to TVS and his party for putting up with the inconvenience and giving an excellent performance, regardless.