

## MANDOLIN U. SRINIVAS: A REVIEW

Pratibha Adipudi

Sunday May 2, 1993, 4:30 PM. There is pindrop silence in the auditorium. The audience sits in restless anticipation of the coming sound. As the curtain opens, a roar of applause echoes throughout the hall. Who is this person that stirs up such excitement in these people? It is none other than the world-renowned prodigy, "Mandolin" Uppalappu Srinivas, loved by all who have heard his captivating music. May 2 [SRUTI concert, ed.] marked the only solo concert by Srinivas in the NJ/PA/DE area. The lucky audience present was able to hear and experience three amazing hours of Srinivas' heavenly melodies.

Srinivas began the Philadelphia concert with a Navaragamalika varnam. Upon ending this "warm-up" piece and another piece, he proceeded to render a rare Thyagaraja kriti, *Intanuchu*, in the raga *Gundakriya*. On that day, as I remember, I was wishing that Srinivas would play a piece in *Kharaharapriya*. To my surprise and pleasure, Srinivas dazzled the audience with a beautiful rendering of *Nadachi nadachi* in *Kharaharapriya*. As if this was not incredible enough, Srinivas' next item was another rare piece whose raga sent a few giggles through the audience when he announced it - Thyagaraja's composition *Anaadhudunu gaanu* in the raga *Jingala*.

As typical concerts usually go, the RTP is almost always the main item. For Srinivas, his *Thodi* RTP meant another chance to astonish the audience with his alapana, a perfect combination of melodious bhavam and intricate gamakas, his many unique variations of the pallavi line, and innovative swara kalpana. In addition, Srinivas creatively selected the ragas *Kedara*, *Kanada*, and *Nasikabhushani* to highlight his ragamalika kalpana of the RTP. With his genius to invent novel swara combinations in split-second timing, it is no wonder that the accomplished musician as well as the layman are awestruck by Mandolin Srinivas' musical feats. The concert's grand finale left the audience wondering which request Srinivas would choose. He seemed to fancy *Venkatachalanilayam*, Purandara Dasa's composition in *Sindhu Bhairavi*, and chose to end the

concert with the famous fast-paced Swati Tirunal thillana in *Dhanasri*.

Srinivas's long time mridangam player, K.V. Prasad, proved to be an amazing accompanist to Srinivas's Mandolin. His tani, progressing over several avartas, revealed his total mastery over tala and rhythmic combinations. Smiling all the while, he effortlessly swept the audience away during his scintillating tani avarthanam.

Of course, no musician is complete without the sweet sound of the violin accompanying him, not even the great Srinivas. Peri S. Rama Murthy perfectly synchronized with Srinivas's mandolin to produce a beautiful blend of melody and accompaniment. This was evident during the RTP in *Thodi* raga.

What I found most pleasing about this concert was the constant contact and acknowledgement between the three musicians, primarily through facial expressions. Not only did they communicate well with each other, each also displayed true enjoyment in playing, especially Srinivas himself. With his smiling face and obvious delight in performing, it is hard not to love this prodigy! Even after the concert was over, Srinivas, showing no signs of tiring, eagerly spoke with, posed with, and honoured the requests of all his die-hard fans. This is how all musicians should act and I certainly consider Srinivas a perfect role-model for young musicians like myself. I know that this Srinivas concert is one that I will never forget and I thank Sruti for providing me the opportunity to listen to one of Carnatic music's most special musicians.

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*Pratibha Adipudi, a senior in high school is the eldest of the three talented children of Rajyalakshmi and Vinay Vardhana Adipudi. SRUTI audience will recall the performance given by her at the Thyagaraja Aradhana, '93.*  
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