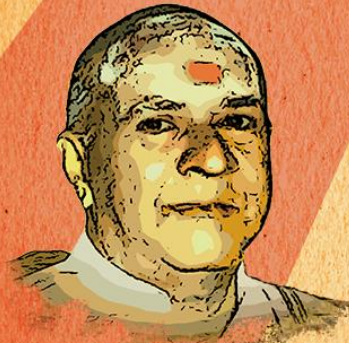
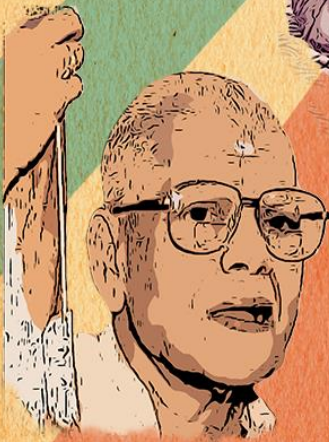




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Sruti
The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphía

SRUTI RANJANI



Volume 32

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From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

Greetings! I hope you are all having a great start to the holiday season. It gives me great pleasure to communicate with all of you through this year's edition of Sruti Ranjani. I want to start by thanking each one of you for your unflinching support for Sruti. I am immensely proud of my talented team on the Sruti board (and their spouses and family) for their tireless contributions towards making this a stellar year where we showcased a variety of top-quality singers, instrumentalists, and dancers.

The Thyagaraja aradhana celebrations this year returned to the traditional day long format with Utsava Sampradaya and Pancharatna renditions and participation from numerous kids and teachers in the community. The prime concert this year was rendered by India-based artist, Dr. R. Suryaprakash, a disciple of Sangeetha Kalanidhi T. V. Sankaranarayanan and a torchbearer of the Madurai Mani Iyer school. The spring season featured accomplished vocalists, Abhishek Raghuram and Malladi Brothers, who enthralled the audiences with wonderful performances. As part of a multiyear grant from PNC Arts Alive, we also presented a Bharatanatyam dance recital by Shijith and Parvathy, with a live orchestra. For the first time in over two decades, Sruti was proud to bring a unique instrumental ensemble featuring the Nadaswaram and Violin – The Carnatic Quartet (supported in part by PA council for the arts). The team delivered an amazing concert that received raving feedback and reviews. The season ended with a spectacular concert by veteran musician, Sangeetha Kalanidhi and Padma Bhushan, Sudha Ragunathan – supported in part by a grant from Paul Angell foundation.

Two young and incredibly talented instrumentalists from India and North America – Vainika Ramana Balachandhran and Violinist Kamalakiran Vinjamuri – combined to present a melodic confluence of strings to kickstart our fall season. The highlight of this year's programs was the Kuchipudi dance recital by the acclaimed duo of Jaikishore and Padmavani Mosalikanti – a program enabled by the first ever federal grant for Sruti from the National Endowment for Arts. We also presented an outreach program with the dancers at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which drew a crowd of more than 120, including mainstream audience. Execution of this program that was stalled for over three years due to the pandemic is a testament to the perseverance and hard work of numerous individuals on the Sruti Boards during this period. Our fall season also featured several young and rapidly rising musicians including Sriranjani Santhanagopalan, Akkarai Sisters and Kruthi Bhat. Notably, we were excited to re-establish our collaboration with Montgomery County Community College Lively Arts series where our audience were able to enjoy Sriranjani's concert in the ambience of an upgraded performance hall.

In keeping with our mission of promoting young and aspiring home-grown talent, we presented Bala Bhavam concert by Sruthi Ramesh in Spring. At the time of this writing, the board is planning to present another Bala Bhavam concert as part of our Sruti day in December. On the music education and outreach sector, we presented a 3-day workshop by Sangita Kalanidhi Neyveli Sri Santhanagopalan attended by several community students, teachers, and music enthusiasts.

Thanks to all our members for the continued patronage as well as support from funders, Sruti has remained fiscally strong with sponsorships, concert patrons and grant funding despite the ever-increasing costs associated with presenting concerts. This has helped us to keep our membership and sponsorship prices reasonable and affordable. We are particularly thankful for funding from the National Endowment for Arts, Pennsylvania Council for the Arts. Paul Angell Foundation and PNC Arts Live that supported many different concerts this year. Part of a capital grant from The Presser Foundation helped us to acquire a state-of-the-art audio system. With our usual sound contractor changing their business model late last year, we quickly pivoted to alternate approaches, and I am pleased to say that we have a great workaround and the quality of sound at our concerts has come to be top class. I also want to

acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the publication, marketing, resources committee directors and members that has helped with the seamless execution of our programs. The energetic and dynamic Sruti Youth Group were as usual excellent this year helping with program coordination, ushering, hospitality, artist interviews and much more.

Over the last several years, we have had an ever-expanding fan base for Sruti with new memberships and sponsorships from areas beyond the tri-state region. The feedback from our surveys, the likes and comments on our media posts and video snippets clearly indicate that Sruti has and will remain as one of the foremost arts organizations in North America adored by the members, the music community and above all, the artists that always look forward to performing for us.

Sruti has been a part and parcel of our life over the last 15 years and will forever remain our extended family. It has been an absolute pleasure and a humbling experience to lead this organization together with an enterprising team, and I am profusely thankful for this opportunity. I wish the incoming board under Lata Suresh the very best for 2024.

Musically Yours,

Pitchumani Sivakumar



From the Publications and Outreach Committee

Dear Sruti Members,

On behalf of the Publications Committee, it gives me great pleasure to present you with the 2023 edition of Sruti Ranjini! We have had a memorable year of music and dance programs performed by preeminent practitioners of Indian Art. Every artist who has graced our stage brought with them their own 'bani' - performance styles honed and chiseled over decades by their Gurus and Gurus' Gurus, the great Vidwans and Vidushis of the last century.

As we were looking for a theme for Sruti Ranjini, we didn't have to look far – this year happens to be the birth centenary of doyens of Indian Art like Vidwan M.D. Ramanathan, Vidwan Palghat K.V. Narayanaswamy, Vidwan Nookala Chinna Satyanarayana, Vidwan T M Thiagarajan and the living legend Vidwan Dr. T.K. Murthy. Unfortunately, we also witnessed the passing of great artists like Vidwan Karaikkudi R. Mani, Vidushi C. Lalitha (of Bombay sisters), Vidushi Neela Ramgopal, Vidushi Dwaram Mangathayaru and Vidushi Sikkil Neela. We owe immense gratitude to these iconic artists who have bequeathed us with their incredible artistry, compositions and enriched the art by training the next generation of artists. This Sruti Ranjini issue is a humble effort to collectively pay homage to their contributions.

Balaji Raghothaman's artwork adorns our cover page. Balaji has very aptly portrayed the stars of the Carnatic firmament whose artistic radiance that we, the lovers of Indian music and dance, bask under. Thank you, Balaji!

I thank the writers of these tributes that include performing musicians who, despite their busy schedule, took time out to pen these tributes. We truly appreciate the Sruti members who contributed their reviews of the performances this year. Bringing out a publication of this size is teamwork, and I could not have done without the fantastic efforts of Jayram Sataluri and Aparna Iyer. Jayram was instrumental in getting and editing the content and Aparna has led the formatting of the publication. I thank them both for their time and commitment.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Sruti President Sivakumar for being a very supportive leader. My appreciation for the collegial and encouraging Board members of Sruti who made this year a lot of fun. Finally, I want to thank my husband, Ram, for his kindness, patience and all around support.

I seek your feedback on any matter pertaining to Sruti Ranjini or other publications from this year. Please email publications@sruti.org with your feedback.

Yours musically,

Rajee Padmanabhan

On behalf of the SRUTI Publications and Outreach Committee

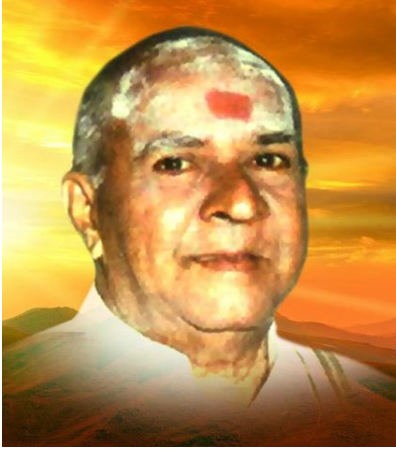
Note on cover design: Balaji Raghothaman

As Sruti pays homage to these great artists in Sruti Ranjini, I tried to create stylized sketches based on their photographs. The techniques used are not unlike those in superhero cartoon strips. This felt somehow apt, because, having attained a timeless aura through their achievements and contributions, these are the superheroes of the Carnatic world. Hope you get as much enjoyment out of them as I did in creating the montage. Thanks to Ramanathan Iyer and Sikkil Gurucharan for some of the original photographs.

Sangita Kalanidhi T. M. Thiagarajan: A Teacher, Musician and Tunesmith Par Excellence

Dr. G Baby Sreeram

Vid. T. M. Thiagarajan also known as TMT was a complete musician with a multifaceted musical excellence. Belonging to a very glorious and illustrious parampara, his ancestors were Nattuvanars and musicians at Tanjore. His grandfather Vid. Kuppuswamy Pillai went along with Kannuswamy Pillai to Baroda along with Chimna Bai (Rani Lakshmi Bai) of Tanjore as part of her dowry when she got married to Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III of Baroda. His great grandfather was also a Nattuvanar.



TMT also learnt Bharatanatyam and performed in lady costumes. He participated in dramas of T.K. Shanmukham and was fortunate to sing and act in the famous Pavizhakodi. He started learning Carnatic Music from his father Mahalingam Pillai, a mridangam vidwan. His first concert was at Thiruvaiyyaru at the age of 8 for which he was well appreciated by Pudukkottai Dakshinamurthi Pillai, who accompanied him in Mridangam.

A disciple of Sangita Kalanidhi Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, he had been under his guidance when Semmangudi was at Trivandrum as the Principal of Swati Thirunal Academy of Music in 1941. TMT taught the students at the college in the absence of his guru. He was held in high regard by his colleagues and senior musicians such as Vid. K.V. Narayanaswamy, Vid. Ramnad Krishnan, Vid. Tanjore S. Kalyanaraman and so on. Vidushi M. L. Vasanthakumari has also learnt many compositions tuned by TMT and popularized them.

He was a highly conscientious musician and had very strong views on the grammar of ragas. He boldly stood by his firm beliefs before any musician. While he adhered to tradition, he was also very innovative and tactfully balanced between tradition and innovation. His concerts were performed in the traditional format followed by Carnatic Music.

He possessed a remarkable repertoire of compositions, rendering various types of compositions, both popular and rare krithis in popular and rare ragas in his concerts. He included compositions tuned by himself, composed by himself as well as compositions of contemporary composers. Being born in Nattuvanar family, he had a very strong Laya. His Laya excellence was exhaustively expressed in his handling of Ragam Tanam Pallavi.

He was an excellent administrator. He joined as a music teacher in the Central College of Carnatic Music in 1962 and became a professor in the year 1970. In 1974, he became the Vice Principal and in 1977 the Principal, retiring in 1981. He also presided over the Teachers Training College of Music Academy as Principal.

He was an acclaimed composer and a great tunesmith. He has composed many varnams and krithis. He has also tuned several composer's compositions such as Guru Surajananda's lyrics (most popular among is "Muruganin Marupeyar Azhagu in Behag), Spencer Venugopal (sari samana in Vidavi raga), Thevarams (Vaananai in Keeravani) and Andaal Paasuram (Karppooram Narumo from Naachiyaar Thirumozhi), His chittaswarams are very popular because of its intricate mathematical excellence (ex, Palimparavadelara in Arabhi and Enthani in Oormika). He has also tuned some Narayana Theerthar Tharangams in rare and new ragas like Madhyamaravali, Mukthidayini, Hamsavinodini etc. The Ranjani Ragamalika is the most popular among his tuned compositions.

He is also a Vaggeyakkara and has composed in Tamil. He has popularized many compositions such as Theruvatheppo Nenje of Neelakanta Sivan, Jagadeeswari in Mohanam, Sree Kamakshi Katakshi in Vasantha and Ekkalathilum in Purvikalyani of Thiruvavarur Ramaswami Pillai. His intellectual development of sangatis to the compositions were innovative and melodically suitable.

Being his disciple, I have to specially mention his notations as well as his handwriting. He had some 20-30 books of notations, carefully handwritten in a systematic way. He strictly followed the same notation with all the students and never encouraged deviation from the script while singing. He was a man of discipline, which made him a great teacher. As a great teacher, he has created so many wonderful performers and teachers like Dr. Nirmala Sunderrajan, Subhashini Parthasaradhi, Lakshmi Pothuval, Kuzhithurai Viswanathan, Lakshmi Rangarajan, Seetharama Iyer, Smt. Mangalam Shankar, Veena Gayathri, Smt. Raji Gopalakrishnan, and yours truly amongst others.

Born and brought up in Trivandrum, Dr. G Baby Sreeram started her musical training with Vid. Ananthalakshmi Venkataraman. She took advanced music lessons from Sangita Kalanidhi T M Thiagarajan under the Government of India Talent Search Scholarship from the Department of Culture. Dr. Baby Sreeram did her master's and doctoral degree from Kerala University. Dr. Baby Sreeram is an accomplished Vaggeyakara and an A grade artist of the All India Radio. She currently works as a teacher in the Advanced School of Carnatic Music at Music Academy, Chennai.

The Endlessness of Time - A tribute to M. D. Ramanathan

Ramanathan N. Iyer

M. D. Ramanathan, perhaps the most unique maestro amongst all the giants of 20th century Carnatic music, has been written about and feted quite a bit, especially in this centenary year that another attempt might seem rather superfluous. But MDR, to me, remains the benchmark for two aspects - 1) the effective conveyance of emotion through voice alone and 2) the utilization of time as an infinite resource!



He is the arresting figure - physically as well as musically - that as an eight-year-old, I first set my eyes on at the Navaratri Mandapam in Thiruvananthapuram. As he emerged in full six-foot plus glory after a memorable concert along with Palakkad Mani Iyer, the awe-inducing percussion genius, the first impression was so vivid because the imposing physical stature matched my mental picture when I first heard that booming voice on radio, singing a Tamizh composition whose lyrics were something that even a child could connect with. It described the duality of Vishnu & Shiva (Hari and Haran) in such simple language and was sung in a way that I, that listening child, could vividly imagine the serpent coiled around Shiva's neck and on whom Vishnu lay in repose. If someone could do *abhinayam* - enactment - with voice alone and convey a powerful message, this was it. And that *Athana* remains the benchmark of instant, indelible raga identity.

That fascination evolved into years of listening to his music with a rapt attention that he commanded rather than demanded. Each time the takeaway is how he disproves the popular notion that time is a scarce resource. In a world that's always in a tearing hurry, how did he alone make leisurely pauses even in the middle of an *alapana* or *neraval* or *swaraprastara* to let the mood sink in, to let us absorb the *raga swarupa*...? How did he manage to untie and adjust his tuft with a naughty smile mid-lyric, yet maintain the *kalapramanam* (tempo) and resume without batting an eyelid? Where a restless human mind craves continuous input to keep it occupied, how did he engage us with the beauty of silence? In the Bhairavi swarajati, he conveys the stately gait of the elephant in *madamatta gajagama padmabhava hari shambhunutapada*; and describes vividly the lion and the intoxicated tusker in *mada danuja vaarana mrugendrarcchita* all while maintaining the tempo with just the inflections in the voice! Who else can describe to us in such detail the scene of the coronation in Mamava Pattabhirama with all its pageantry and a long list of nobles flanking the throne? Or that utterly delectable *neraval* at *nlla nlrada sarlra*, in Balagopala Palaya where Krishna's detail is conveyed exactly as Muttuswami Dikshitar would have visualized him while composing.

MDR also stands out, of course, for peerless enunciation of *sloka*m and *vrtta*m. The most remarkable one I have heard is surely *ratnakarosti sadanam* which he has wonderfully detailed in Todi. This lyric which describes the ocean full of diamonds as the Lord's residence with Lakshmi occupying pride of place and Radha occupying His mindspace is the work of Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, a military general in Akbar's army who was also a Persian & Samskrtam scholar! The recording of MDR singing this followed by a delightful explanation in his unique accent is something that has invariably left me in tears.

I had the fortune of playing a small part in preserving his rich legacy. It started out as a chance encounter over an Internet discussion forum where a friend tipped me off that the person with a cryptic login name who had posted recently about MDR might actually be Balaji, the legend's son. On an impulse I shot off an e-mail, enquiring bluntly whether that was true and asking if he had any recordings of my icon. My sole aim in life at that point of time was the enhancement of my personal music collection, especially hard-to-find nuggets of old masters. Balaji promptly and courteously responded, and since then we were in touch off and on, mostly through e-mail. That culminated with my entering the portals of #91, Ponniamman Koil Street, Adyar to be warmly and hospitably welcomed by Visalam *mami*, the simple and unassuming wife of the maestro. Armed with a scanner, laptop and a consent from Balaji, my aim was the digital archiving of the compositions of MDR, notated and neatly recorded in his own handwriting.

The "Compositions of Varadadasa", mostly in Telugu and Sanskrit (and a few in Tamil & Malayalam) were written down by MDR in three slim notebooks. It so happens that soon after MDR passed away in April 1984, while the family was still grief-stricken and in turmoil, someone from Kalakshetra - the institution where MDR spent a lifetime - took away the notebooks. They presumably landed up in someone's attic or in a dusty corner of the Kalakshetra library and had been lost for years. Visalam *mami* and Balaji had been trying very hard over the past few years to retrieve these priceless treasures, knocking on many doors and trying various sources in Kalakshetra itself. Balaji being in the US, it was even more difficult to follow up on those efforts, but as he himself said in one of his e-mails to me, "I am sure with his (MDR's) blessings, I should be able to get most of them in the near future". That hope became reality, for the manuscripts were retrieved with help from Sri. Rajaram, the ex-principal of Kalakshetra. It turns out that the notebooks were languishing in some forgotten corner of a library! The digitized pages are now archived and available on demand from Balaji to any interested music scholar, student or *rasika*.

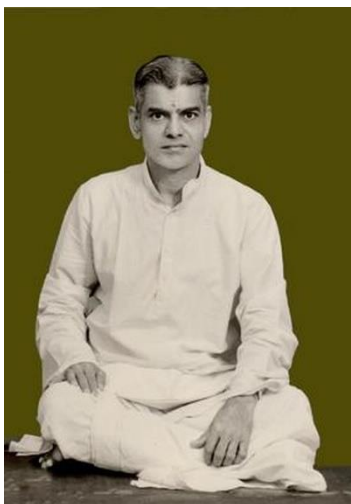
On that first visit to MDR's house, Visalam *mami* offered me *aval* - hand-pounded rice flakes mixed with coconut and jaggery. I had it in the presence of his *tambura*, seeing him smile benevolently down at me from the picture on the wall. It was a metaphor for his music - simple with just three ingredients but deceptively complex in flavour, depth and pure emotion. I experienced at that moment, what Sudama felt receiving the fistful of *aval* in Krishna's palace!

Ramanathan N Iyer, a Wireless Communications engineer, is a passionate Chennai-based promoter, photographer & curator of the performing arts.

Palghat K. V. Narayanaswami and His Bhakthi-filled Music

Arvind Lakshmikanthan

Palghat Sri K. V. Narayanaswami, affectionately also called as KVN and a distinguished Carnatic vocalist, left an indelible mark on the world of classical Indian music with his exceptional talent, devotion to the art form, and a deep-rooted understanding of the Carnatic tradition. Born on November 15, 1923, to Kollengode Viswanathayyar and Muthulakshmi Ammal in Palghat, Kerala, into a family of well-known musicians, KVN's journey as a musician began early in life, and he eventually rose to become one of the most respected and renowned Carnatic vocalists of his time.



Introduced to the basics of carnatic music by his father, KVN started his formal singing lessons initially with renowned mridangam vidwan Sri Palghat Mani Iyer. Shortly afterwards, he came under the tutelage of Sri C. S. Krishna Iyer, a well-known vocalist and composer. Sometime in 1942, as a nineteen year-old, at the recommendation of Sri Palghat Mani Iyer, KVN began his gurukulam under prominent vocalist Sri Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar. For the next twenty-five years, until the passing of Sri Ramanuja Iyengar, KVN remained as his disciple.

One of the defining characteristics of KVN's music was his ability to evoke profound emotional responses in his listeners. His renditions were marked by an inherent spirituality, which stemmed from his deep understanding of the spiritual and philosophical underpinnings of Carnatic music. He was not merely a vocalist but a master at using his voice to invoke emotions and to connect with the divine. His music was a transcendental experience, transporting audiences to a different realm, where

they could momentarily forget their worldly concerns.

KVN's adherence to traditional values and his commitment to the preservation of the Carnatic tradition were exemplary. He was a purist, unwavering in his dedication to maintaining the authenticity of the compositions he rendered. His ability to present age-old compositions with an exquisite blend of classicism and innovation was highly regarded by musicians all over. He had a profound knowledge of the compositions of not only the Trinity of Carnatic music, but also many contemporary composers. His interpretations breathed fresh life into compositions while respecting their sanctity.

In particular, what set KVN apart in his performances was not just his technical virtuosity but also his emotional connectivity or bhakthi. His renditions were marked by their emotive power, enabling him to connect with audiences at a deeply spiritual as well as at an emotional level. His intricate gamakas, perfect enunciation of lyrics, and an impeccable sense of laya were evident in every note or phrase he sang. His tonal quality and control over his voice allowed him to effortlessly traverse the octaves, making even the most complex ragams and talams sound accessible and engaging.

Throughout his career, KVN received numerous accolades and awards in recognition of his immense contribution to the world of Carnatic music. His concerts were eagerly awaited events, not only for the sheer musical brilliance they offered but also for the spiritual experience they provided to the audience. KVN's music transcended borders, and he was an ambassador of Carnatic music on the global stage. His concerts abroad garnered acclaim and established him as a cultural icon, helping to promote Indian classical music internationally.

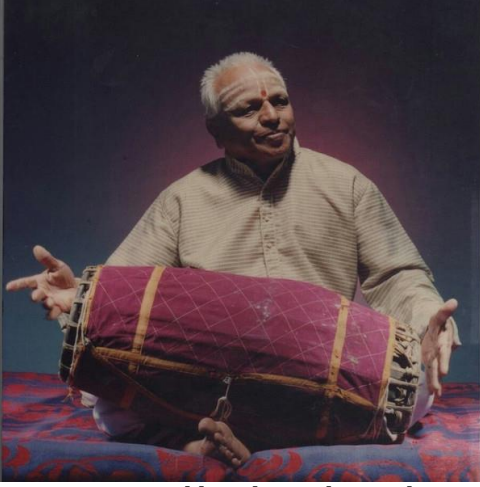
In 2002, KVN left this mortal world, leaving behind a rich legacy that continues to inspire and influence generations of Carnatic musicians. His music endures as a testament to the timeless beauty of the Carnatic tradition, and his name is synonymous with excellence, devotion, and spirituality in the world of Indian classical music. His artistry was not just about singing; it was a spiritual journey that touched the hearts and souls of all who had the privilege of listening to him, and it will forever remain etched in the annals of Carnatic music history.

Arvind L. is a violinist and an ardent supporter of SRUTI.

Happy Centenary Birthday Dr TK Murthy

Jayram Sataluri

100 years old is a rare achievement. Though there are centenarians amongst us, it is extremely rare to have a Carnatic musician reach the landmark while having their faculties intact. Out of the musicians whose centenaries fall this year, only one of them has been the most fortunate to achieve and celebrate the magnificent milestone with grand honor and pomp by the Indian music fraternity.



From the late 20s to today, the grand mridangam pithamaha Padmashri Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. TK Murthy also known as TKM has seen and done it all. And how blessed we are to have him with us today! Though I have never seen him live, I have listened to him for so long that I can recognize him on mridangam instantly. I love how he has adapted his play each time while maintaining the strict tradition of the Thanjavur bAni.

Each sollukattu, theermanam and korvai emanating from his mridangam is pure Thanjavur bAni; it is exactly what the great Thanjavur Vaidyanatha Iyer taught him. It is highly mathematical but pleasing to all. He has mastered all 108 thalams and has created moharas and korvais for all of them. He never repeats a sollukattu; he always plays variations of the same rhythmic pattern to highlight the bountiful brilliance of the Thanjavur bAni. The clarity of his strokes whether on a kappi or kuchi mridangam are

captivating and his thanis have always been breathtaking.

One should listen to his thanis to know how to properly structure them. For example, in an Adi thalam thani, he starts off with 1st kalam chatusra gathi and plays the appropriate sollukattus that fit the thalam. Then he goes into 2nd kalam chatusram and displays the sollukattus that exemplify Thanjavur Vaidyanatha Iyer's genius which not only appeal to the serious listener/mridangam student but the common man. Then in his third round or even in the second round, he switches to tisram and plays fitting patterns that transition seamlessly from one to the other. Sometimes, depending on the vidwat of the main artist he is playing for, in his next rounds he plays kandam, misram and sankeernam to exhibit the inexhaustible excellence that his guru taught him. Finally, he finishes off with a fiery farans, majestic mohara and crafty korvai. This is not only meant for mridangam students but listeners too.

I remember the first time I heard TKM sir which was a commercial album with the Hyderabad Brothers called Vandeham and Other Krithis and I was amazed to hear the clarity and brilliant strokes from such a senior vidwan. He took that album to another level. Many more commercial and noncommercial recordings with his playing followed and he became one of my most favorite mridangam vidwans ever. What endeared him to me was his adaptation to different artists and circumstances without sacrificing an iota of quality.

Since he could sing very well, he knew exactly how to play for a krithi or even play the krithi. For example, one of my friends mentioned about a Madurai GS Mani concert where muccaTa brahmAdulaku was being rendered and TKM sir was playing the beginning of the pallavi line as a theermanam before GS Mani sir repeated the line. It just fit in so well. Another time was when he was in perfect sync with Balamuralikrishna and MS Gopalakrishnan by nailing the charanam line "naTiyinci naTiyinci" for BMK sir's kalyANavasantam krithi, gANamAlinci. And finally, he sounded youthful with Sanjay Subrahmanyam in the December 5th 2000 Narada Gana Sabha concert released by Charsur, especially his "rolling" sollus during the swaraprastara at "rakta naLina daLa" of jAnakI ramaNa.

But there is one artist that he is forever synonymous with, and she is no other than MS Subbulakshmi. She actively encouraged his career for 5 decades and was so confident in his playing that he never needed to curtail it at all. Such was his love and devotion to the divine personality he always considered his elder sister. Some of the greatest highlights with MSS Amma are the famous 3 LP 1970 HMV commercial album, the Annamacharya krithis albums and

most importantly the 1966 UN concert. He was also one of the early mridangam vidwans who actively accompanied/played for women when many of his contemporaries refused to do so.

As a guru, he has nurtured so many wonderful disciples to carry on the Thanjavur bAni such as KV Prasad, J Vaidyanathan, B Sivaraman, KP Parameswaran (who plays exactly like TKM sir), Dr. VV Vaidhyanathan, Palghat Harinarayanan (who I know well), KV Gopalakrishnan and Aswini Srinivasan to name a few. According to his disciple Harinarayanan, he would urge them to regularly practice sollukattus and sequential rhythmic patterns in all the jAtis, nadais and numerous tALams so that they could create new patterns on their own while keeping in mind the strong foundation of the Thanjavur bAni. (Harinarayanan, 2023)

I have read many online posts lamenting the painful death of the robust mridangam play emblematic of the Thanjavur bAni. But I disagree. I have been fortunate to listen to many of his disciples play and they do bring out the brilliance of the Thanjavur school style he has taught them. It is still flourishing, and we shouldn't waste time mourning its so-called demise.

Instead, we should cherish the fact that a towering mridangam legend is still here and celebrate his life now. The internet is our friend, and we have access to his thanis and the concerts where he has accompanied/played for.

I pray to the Almighty that TK Murthy sir has a happy and healthy centenary year and I send my praNAms to him, his family, and his disciples! May the Thanjavur bAni always flourish!

References

Harinarayanan, P. A. (2023). *T.K. MURTHY - A CENTENARIAN*. Retrieved from <https://www.sruti.com/artist/tk-murthy-a-centenarian>.

Clips for your listening pleasure:

Adi tALam thani with the genius G Harishankar from a Dr. M Balamuralikrishna-MS Gopalakrishnan Nanganallur Anjaneya Temple concert on January 3rd 1996: https://youtu.be/ZJR_NP7vFzM?t=1578

Adi tALam thani with V Nagarajan from a TN Seshagopalan-Mysore Nagaraj Gokulashtami concert where he recites konnakkol: https://youtu.be/_FRfuFKENQg?t=8516

Adi tALam thani from a DK Jayaraman concert: <https://youtu.be/iowyuEY-ZPE?feature=shared&t=4079>

Adi tALam thani w/ G Harishankar and EM Subramaniam from a Hyderabad Brothers Ayodhya Mandapam concert: <https://youtu.be/YUZNf0Fp50w?feature=shared&t=7574>

w/ MS Subbulakshmi rendering cakkani rAja: <https://youtu.be/uwYaPGFrvIk>

miSra cApu thani w/ late V Nagarajan and TH Vinayakram from a MSS Amma Vani Mahal concert: <https://youtu.be/tnrs5kdI4CE?feature=shared&t=3536>

w/ Mani Krishnaswamy rendering kanTa jUDumI: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfW76yldCeA>

w/ GN Balasubramaniam rendering an RTP in Devamanohari: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIXAyW9G9-4>

w/ fellow centenarian MD Ramanathan at an AIR Chennai Bala Arangu recital: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2Wbofx9Zww>

You may access his YouTube Page: <https://www.youtube.com/@T.K.Murthy/>

Jayram Sataluri is a rasika and an ardent supporter of SRUTI.

A Tribute to Nookala

Aditya Kurre

In the darbar of Carnatic stalwarts, in between Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna and Voleti Venkateswarulu, there exists a special seat for musician, teacher, and scholar - Sri Nookala Chinna Satyanarayana.



Nookala Garu began his journey at his home in Anakapalli, where he received basic training from his mother, Yegnachayanamma. He often participated in traditional theater, but he was not drawn to it in the same way he was to music. After grasping some initial exercises, he began training under Vijayawada Mangalampalli Pattabhiramayya, father of Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna. Nookala Garu often recounted how his guru considered him as his own son, fondly calling him “Satya.” His interest in violin later led him to Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, who taught Nookala the nuances of the instrument. Arguably, Naidu’s most important gift to Nookala Garu was not in violin – it was introducing him to Sangeeta Kalanidhi Dr. Sripada Pinakapani of Kurnool,

Nookala’s final and most influential guru.

Under Pinakapani, Nookala Garu learned the stylistic modulations of the Thanjavur bAni – placing emphasis on the brisk gamakas and strong sense of kala-pramanam that work to imitate Veena music. He avidly learned the 108 Annamacharya Sankeertanas that Pinakapani had tuned, as well as the Kritis of Spencer Venugopal that Pinakapani was so fond of. In Pinakapani, Nookala Garu not only saw a guru and friend, but the personification of sangeetam itself. While Nookala Garu undoubtedly came under the fold of Pinakapani’s sangeetam, he developed a unique musical philosophy that set him apart.

In terms of voice culture, Nookala was able to produce a deep, rich, honey-like sound, saturated with raga-bhavam. In fact, Nookala Garu’s voice culture can be considered a point of convergence between his music and that of Balamuralikrishna – both learned from the same teacher after all. He staunchly believed that sahityam was equally as important as sangeetam. In each of his renditions, he ensured that the lyrical content of the piece was portrayed in its most authentic and grammatically correct form. For instance, when tuning Annamacharya Sankeertanas, he made sure to tune each and every charanam, arguing that each charanam was vital in telling the story of the piece. Even at the level of a single phrase, Nookala Garu was not afraid to deviate from the canonical notation in order to better depict the song’s poetry. In Tyagaraaja’s *Jagadanandakaraka*, for example, a phrase in the fifth charanam is commonly sung with the following syntax: “*pati sutApdhi madaharA nurA garA garA jithakathA sArahita*.” When teaching this phrase, Nookala Garu would strictly instruct to split the words such that the phrase “...*anurAga rAga rAjitha kathA sArahita*,” to accurately communicate the meaning, “one who is the essence of the story of compassion and love.” Nookala Garu made this correction in one instance during a Pancharatna workshop at the Madras Music Academy. After the lesson, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer told Nookala Garu that he made a point that was due for a few decades.

A discussion of Nookala Garu’s music would not be complete without a discussion of his deva-bhakti. Nookala’s devotion to God was truly never ending. My teacher, T.P. Chakrapani, a student of Nookala Garu, recounts the instances when Nookala would exit his home, only to weep at the sight of an Anjaneya Swami statue across the street. It was this Bhakti, this love for the paramatma, that drove him to not only learn and sing the compositions of great Vaggeyakaras, but to tune their poetry and write songs of his own. Attributed to Nookala Garu are the melodies of dozens of Annamacharya Sankeertanas. Some of his popular compositions are the tunes to “*Ippuditukalaganti*” in Bowli, “*Annitkidi Paramaushadamu*” which uses a graha bheda on the raga Kharaharapriya to feature the ragas Harikambhoji, Kalyani, and Todi, “*Deva Devam*” in Janasammohini, which was inspired by Ustad Amir Khan’s renditions of the Hindustani raag “Kalavati,” and my personal favorite, “*Chatedanidiye*” in Madhyamavathi. When tuning these Sankeertanas, Nookala Garu would begin by simply reading the poetry. Only until he understood the deeper meaning behind the lyrics did he begin to think of an appropriate ragam. Compared to the tuning strategy of his guru, Pinakapani, who would select a ragam, practice it, and then choose a Sankirtana to tune, Nookala garu’s

strategy affirms the importance he gave to Sahityam and sahitya-bhavam. In addition to tuning songs of Annamayya, Ramadasa, and Narayana Teertha, Nookala Garu has a number of original compositions to his name. One such composition is “Srinivasa Varadayaka,” in Natakuranji, which Nookala Garu composed while traversing the Srivari Mettu of Tirumala, rendering the song in its entirety when he reached the sanctum sanctorum atop the hill.

Captivated by the beauty of the lord, he sang:

*Ni karuna kaTAksha balamu ||
Ni ramaNI krUpA vIkshaNamu ||
Ne kOriti ninu vEDitI ||
rAkEndu vadana srI satyadEvA ||*

O, Lord with compassionate glances ||
Bestow your grace upon me ||
Recognize my anguish for you ||
Whose face is as bright as the moon, O Satyadeva ||

In spite of the thousands of concerts he gave, publications displaying his linguistic prowess, and innumerable titles and awards, Nookala Garu is remembered by his students not as an accomplished musician, but as a father-figure, friend, and compassionate guru. He welcomed everyone, irrespective of their background, age, and experience to learn from him in his own home. He would create small stories to explain the bhavam behind pieces, encouraging students to picture the juxtaposing calmness and aggression of the ocean to better sing Tyagaraaja’s Ksheera Sagara. He explained difficult ragams like Charukesi by explaining them as homogenous mixtures of the simpler ragams Sankarabharanam and Todi. By creating a welcoming atmosphere for musicians one-and-all, Nookala Garu played a crucial role in making Carnatic music approachable and absorbable, popularizing it not only in Hyderabad, but in Andhra as a whole.

In the darbar of Carnatic stalwarts, I imagine Nookala Garu and Balamuralikrishna experimenting with different ragas on the violin and viola. I imagine that with Voleti, he listens to ghazals and taranas as he begins to think of a new Annamacharya Sankeertana to tune. I imagine him practicing with Pinakapani, both of them entranced in the music, as Nookala sheds tears of devotion. Many affirm that their grasp of music is a mere drop from a vast ocean – I believe my music was born from these tears of joy shed from above.

To Nookala Chinna Satyanarayana, Thank you.

Aditya Kurre is a Carnatic vocal student of Sri T.P. Chakrapani, based in Hyderabad, India. He has been learning music since the age of 8, giving performances regionally and nationally as well as being awarded for the same. He is particularly interested in promoting the works of saint and composer, Tallapaka Annamacharya, recently completing “Sripadam,” a video project featuring a series of Annamacharya sankeertanas tuned by Sripada Pinakapani and his students. Aditya is a Junior at Vanderbilt University studying biology. In his free time, he enjoys playing tennis and spending time with his dogs.

A Tribute to Carnatic Flute Artist Sikkil Neela

Balachandar Krishnaraj

Sikkil Neela, one of the most celebrated carnatic flute artists of all time, passed away on September 17, 2023, at the age of 85. She was the younger half of the legendary Sikkil Sisters duo, along with her elder sister Kunjumani.



Born into a family of musicians in the village of Sikkil in Tamil Nadu, India, Neela began learning the flute at a young age from her maternal uncle Azhiyur Narayanaswami Iyer. She made her debut performance at the age of seven and quickly gained recognition for her prodigious talent and unique style.

Neela's flute playing was characterized by its brilliance, clarity, and emotional depth. She had a mastery of all aspects of carnatic music, from the nuances of raga delineation to the intricacies of rhythmic improvisation. Neela's portrayal of ragas like Natabhairavi, Karaharapriya, Kanada, Kapi, Sankarabharanam, Khamboji, Kedaragowla, Sindhubhairavi and Kalyani had a tinge of adventure with a unique aesthetic sensibility. She was also known for her innovative approach to flute playing, incorporating new techniques and ideas into her performances. She was well known for her "gayaka" style, where the krithis from her flute were very close to that of a vocal performer.

Neela and Kunjumani performed together for over six decades, captivating audiences around the world with their sublime music. They were one of the first female artists to break through the male-dominated world of carnatic music and achieved unprecedented success in a field that was traditionally dominated by men.

In addition to her performing career, Neela was also a dedicated teacher and mentor. She trained many of the leading flautists of today, including her own daughter, Sikkil Mala Chandrasekar and was instrumental in honing her grandson, Sikkil Gurucharan's musical abilities. She was also a passionate advocate for carnatic music and worked tirelessly to promote it to new audiences.

Neela's passing is a major loss to the world of carnatic music. She was a true pioneer and a towering figure in the genre. Her legacy will live on through her music and the generations of musicians she inspired. Here are some of the tributes that have been paid to Neela by her peers and students:

Carnatic vocalist T.M. Krishna: "Sikkil Neela was a giant of carnatic music. She had a unique style and a deep understanding of the tradition. Her passing is a major loss to the world of music."

Flutist Nisha Rajagopal: "Sikkil Neela was my guru and my inspiration. She taught me everything I know about flute playing. She was a master of her craft and a true legend."

Musician and musicologist A.K.C. Natarajan: "Sikkil Neela was a pioneer in the field of carnatic flute playing. She broke down many barriers and paved the way for other female musicians to follow. Her legacy is immense and will continue to inspire generations to come."

Neela's life and music were a testament to her dedication to her art and her passion for sharing it with the world. She was a true icon of carnatic music and will be deeply missed.

Balachandar is a flute artist and an avid carnatic rasika. He has studied flute under gurus Mrs. Rajamani and Mrs. Sikkil Mythili Chandrasekaran in Chennai India.

Tribute to Sangeetha Kalanidhi Smt. C. Lalitha

Meera Sivaramakrishnan

The passing of the legendary Lalitha (Chitti as I used to call her) is a colossal loss to the Carnatic Music field. The Bombay Sisters, as they are internationally known, are the most down to earth artists I have ever seen.



The Bombay Sisters are very close to my family. My mother, Kalaimamani Smt. Radha Narayanan has accompanied them umpteen times and it was she (my mom) who requested them to give me an opportunity to accompany them. That is how my career with the Bombay Sisters began. They have never missed a single function in our family. The relationship between my parents and the Bombay Sisters was more than siblings.

Lalitha Chitti had no airs about their popularity and fame. I have traveled widely with them. In fact, we used to travel together and stay in one room. Artists of their caliber usually never share rooms. Those days we used to travel long journeys by 2nd class by train and Lalitha Chitti would bring food for travel, not only for them but also for the accompaniments. Also, they would mix to the level of the youngsters and talk to us while traveling. We used to have fun, apart from concert seriousness. Playing concerts for them was a pleasure as there were no restrictions while accompanying them.

They used to come to my parents' house for Navaratri and take *Vettalai Pakku*. Such was their simplicity. They have given the maximum number of cassettes and even now there is no temple where their devotional music is not heard.

I will miss you loads, Dear Lalitha Chitti!

Kalaimamani Smt. Meera Sivaramakrishnan is a well-known senior violinist who has 5+ decades of accompanying stalwarts like Dr. ML Vasanthakumari, Mani Krishnaswamy, Bombay Sisters, Sudha Ragunathan, Priya Sisters, Madurai Somu, Neyveli Santhanagopalan and Dr. M Balamuralikrishna to name a few.

Tribute to Guru Kaaraikkudi R Mani

Suriya Subramanian

Mridangam maestro Guru Kaaraikkudi R Mani was born on 11 September 1945 and lived until May 4, 2023. During his lifetime, especially in the last three decades of the 20th century, he dominated the world of Carnatic music, delighting rasikas, students and other performing artists. He created a new and original style of playing with unique phrases that sounded so natural but had never been played before. While listeners can easily identify vocal artists in an audio recording, very few instrumental artists achieve this recognition. Mani Sir had this distinction both due to his playing as well as his instrument's unique tone. Most Mridangam vidwans did and do use a Kucchi mridangam which has a softer and sharper tone. Among the minority of vidwans who played with a Kappi mridangam, having a purer resonant tone that rang like a bell, Mani Sir's tonality was unique.

While he was a high-quality performer during his early years, his playing did not stand out in the way we recognize it today. During the 1970s, he practiced hours together for multiple years with a single-minded focus to create what we now call his Bani. He methodically chiseled every aspect of his accompaniment such as the sarvalagu phrases for the Pallavi and Anupallavi of songs, the crisp arudhis that combine fast and slow phrases, mini arudhis during Kalpanaswarams, soothing nadais with extensive use the Gumukki for Tukkadas. Nothing about his playing was impromptu. There was a predictability in what he would play such that the informed rasika knew what was coming next, yet it was exhilarating when the expected sound came when he struck the Mridangam with his powerful hands.

No article about Mani Sir will be complete without the word Thaniavarthanam. In my opinion, the grandeur of his Thanis overshadowed his many other strengths. He planned, practiced and perfected his Thaniavarthamans and stamped his Mudra to his compositions by replaying them thousands of times over decades. He deliberately chose



to limit the quantity of compositions, instead focussing on perfecting his delivery and making people remember them. He performed several Thaniavarthanam concerts and made a mark for the Mridangam in the hearts and minds of Carnatic music rasikas. He was a multi-dimensional artiste who started a melody and percussion ensemble named Sruthilaya as well as collaborated with musicians of other genres from various parts of the world.

While it is fair to say that few others, including his numerous disciples, have come close to replicating Mani Sir's style at his level of quality, all percussion artists and students of today have been inspired and influenced by Mani Sir's playing. His life is a lesson on being fiercely devoted to working hard and succeeding in one's chosen passion.

Suriya Subramanian is a rasika of music.

'The Neela Mami Effect' - A Tribute to legendary musician and Guru, Vidushi Neela Ramgopal

Srikrishnan V, Revathi Subramony and Priyanka C. Prakash

In a bustling room in South Bangalore, there is silence as Vidushi Neela Ramgopal (fondly referred to as Neela Mami), writes her notations as she prepares to teach me the soulful Javali, 'Apadooroku'. Mami spontaneously bursts into the most beautiful Khamas – weaving intricate phrases that showcase the two Nishadams and all the Gandharam landing point variations in the tara sthayi (higher octave). She begins the first line of the Javali, and there are fireworks inside my head, absorbing the magic of her Art.

In March 2023, the world lost an incredible artiste, Guru and human being in Neela Ramgopal, fondly known to everyone as Neela Mami. Being Neela Mami's disciples is one of the greatest gifts we were provided.

Neela Ramgopal's Musical Evolution

Neela Mami's transformation from a naïve girl born into an orthodox family in Kumbakonam, Tamilnadu to a renowned and highly respected musician is a fascinating story. Neela Mami was attracted to music at a very young age. She would slip away from home to the nearby temple as a young girl to listen to Nadaswaram vidwans and concerts by famous musicians during Thyagaraja Uthsavam. Young Neela was put under the tutelage of Sri. Satagopachariyar with the sole purpose of teaching her a few songs that she could present to prospective bride grooms and their families as was customary in those days! She got married at the age of nineteen to Ramgopal mama

and moved to Bangalore. Ramgopal mama and his family were passionate about Carnatic music and often attended Sabha concerts in Chennai and Mami became a regular concertgoer with Mama.



An incident during a Navarathri Golu was a turning point in Neela Mami's life. Neela Mami sang a krithi at the Golu and she was followed by another lady who had received formal training in music. Much to Mami's irritation, everyone complimented the other singer. Mami felt ignored and realized that she lacked proper training in music. She decided to learn Carnatic music the right way from a Guru, practice, sing and prove herself. Neela Mami's first Guru was Sri NM Narayanan (NMN), the famous music critic of the national newspaper The Hindu. NMN was a musician following the bani of Sangita Kalanidhi Smt. Brinda and Smt. Muktha. Mami used to be in Chennai for the December season. She would learn from NMN in the morning and attend concerts in the evenings. After NMN passed away, Mami invited Sri TK Rangachari (TKR) to come to Bangalore and teach regularly. In addition to the compositions, TKR taught Manodharmam, the core of our music and Mami took to it like fish to water! Learning from an experienced concert-performing artiste was a boon for Mami. She considers Sri NMN and Sri TKR as her guiding lights in her pursuit of music. Neela Mami started learning music formally at the age of twenty-three, most performers would have had years of training by this

age!

Mami continued her learning by listening to stalwarts like MLV, GNB, MDR, Ramnad Krishnan, S Kalyanaraman, KVN, Semmangudi and D.K. Pattammal. She was especially fond of M.L. Vasanthakumari, and considered her a manaseeka Guru. As she listened to MLV for hours every day, she started singing in that style. On MLV's invitation Neela mami even accompanied her at a couple of concerts. Based on advice from a well-wisher, Mami decided to venture on a journey to discover her own bani. Mami continued listening to the masters and eventually evolved her own style by imbibing the best Pathantharam of Krithis and manodharmam from various masters.

Neela Mami became a sought-after performer and Guru. She performed at elite sabhas in Chennai, Bangalore and all over India. She received many prestigious awards including the Sangeeta Kala Acharya award from the Madras Music Academy, Kala Rathna from Bangalore Gayana Samaja, the Sangeet Natak Academy award from the President of India and the Karnataka KalaShri award from the government of Karnataka. She was an A-top artist of All India Radio and Doordarshan. She made significant contributions to the field of music education by organizing teaching workshops and lecture demonstrations. Neela Mami released a set of CDs of compositions in the 72 melakarta ragas complete with alapana, neraval and kalpanaswaram – a colossal project!

Neela Ramgopal: the Guru

Neela Mami was an extremely sincere teacher who spent eight hours each day teaching at her home in South Bangalore. She trained hundreds of students over the years, many of whom are successful performers. She embraced modern technology like Skype to expand her reach and teach students all over the world. I had the privilege and blessing to learn from Neela Mami from the time I was a young girl in Bangalore in what was to become a life-long relationship. She instilled in me a passion for Carnatic music and took me through the most enjoyable and fulfilling musical journey for which I am eternally grateful!

Neela Mami was a perfectionist with her students. She would make correction after correction until every little nuance in each and every sangathi was perfect. I can never forget how patiently Mami taught me the intricacies of Mukhari in Karu Baru until she was finally satisfied! Mami meticulously wrote notations in her neat handwriting for every composition that she taught and she must have written thousands of notations in her lifetime. Mami had a penchant for Vivadhi ragas and taught her students many rare compositions in these ragas. She also had a vast repertoire that included composers from Karnataka like Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar, Mysore Sadashiva Rao and Veena Seshanna.

Mami would actively encourage her students to perform and enthusiastically prepare them for concerts. She placed great emphasis on aesthetics like accent, diction and voice modulation, aspects that make for an appealing stage presentation.

Mami was quite modern in her outlook and had a very warm and friendly relationship with her students. Her students were like family to Neela Mami and she was deeply attached to them. It's not surprising that Neela Mami's student family "Neelambari" is a close-knit group. Although we miss Neela Mami immensely, she will always be loved and treasured as a Guru par excellence.

Neela Ramgopal: the Performer

Neela Mami was a born Performer, and her concerts were filled with chaste classicism. Mami could elaborate a myriad of ragas soulfully. Nereval singing was her forte and she took great care to ensure that the chosen line was lyrically apt and meaningful. She derived great pleasure in singing challenging Pallavi's. I had the honor of singing with Mami on stage for several years and witnessed first-hand, the care she took in planning all her concerts. She always would have compositions of the Trinity, she would make it a point to include compositions in at least 4 languages, and a mix of thalams and kalapramaanams. Her concerts always included at least 2 'rare' compositions featuring lesser-known composers, or lesser-known compositions from well-known composers. She was a highly 'democratic' performer: offering her accompanying instrumentalists ample time to showcase their artistry. She greatly cherished stage performance and was always beautifully dressed in a grand colorful saree for the occasion. Her concerts were always full of verve, spontaneity, and intricate mathematics woven seamlessly into aesthetics.

Neela Ramgopal: the incredible human being

Neela Mami will be fondly remembered not only because she was a great musician but the many other rare qualities she possessed- an innate curiosity and love for learning, a zest for life and an indomitable spirit. In spite of the many serious health challenges she faced at different points in life, she was unfazed and continued her life's pursuits. Neela Mami may not be with us today but her legacy lives on through her music and her students.

Srikrishnan V, Revathi Subramony and Priyanka C Prakash are disciples of Sangita Kala Acharya Vidushi Neela Ramgopal, based out of Bangalore, Philadelphia, and Chicago, respectively.

Srikrishnan is a music scholar and Carnatic Violinist from Bangalore. He is an engineer by qualification and was a senior executive in the field of Automotive working with an MNC. He completed his post-graduation in music recently.

Revathi Subramony is a Carnatic vocalist and Teacher and pursues a career in Clinical Pharmacy in Philadelphia. She is a steadfast supporter and past president of SRUTI.

Priyanka C Prakash is a Carnatic performer from Bangalore and TedX speaker, with over 200 concerts including at the Madras Music Academy, and is currently a senior healthcare leader based out of Chicago.

A Tribute to Dwaram Mangathayaru (Aug 29, 1937- Dec 14, 2022)

Amanda Weidman

In the 1990s, as an American student trained in western classical violin and looking for a Karnatic violin teacher with whom I could enter into a guru-disciple relationship, I was encouraged to seek out Dwaram Mangathayaru by my first teacher, Mr. Adrian L'Armand (resident of Swarthmore, PA), himself a western classical violinist who had learned Karnatic music while living in Madras in the early 1960s. Sometime during that period, he had been taken by a friend to hear Mangathayaru play, and the sound of her violin, her "straight ahead" style that so differed from

other violinists' playing, stuck with him for 30 years! Mangathayaru had perfected the style imbibed from her father, the great violinist and musical innovator Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu (1893-1964). In 1994, I became her student and over the next eight years was lucky to be able to learn many of the distinctive items of Dwaram's repertoire, such as his inimitable rendering of "Swara raga sudha," in raga Shankarabharanam; "Raghuvamsa sudha," in raga Kathanakuthuhoolam; and "Meevalla guna dosha" in raga Kapi; as well as the distinctive way in which the Dwaram school unraveled the beauty of ragas like Kalyani and Todi in alapana and tanam.



Despite the fact that she had played with most of the great musicians of her day, accompanied her father regularly in the 1950s and 60s, and had a long career as an A-grade artist on All India Radio, Mangathayaru possessed a striking humility and openness. She appreciated "sincerity" and had a gift for seeing past pretension, beneath the surface to a person's real character. She did not care about gaining or maintaining status, and struck up kind and loving friendships with all kinds of people, whenever she found good "gunam" (character) and "buddhisalitanam" (wisdom, intelligence), whether with her cook's husband or the struggling young sari salesman who would come to the house to display his wares. Mangathayaru did not boast of her own achievements; in fact, she played, and taught, as if the beautiful moments in music were not her own creation, but rather already out there in the world and just waiting to be discovered.

I recently had the pleasure of returning to the many recordings I made from the years between 1994 and 2002 when I was Mangathayaru's student. On those recordings I can hear her voice, sometimes right beside me singing phrases of a composition or raga alapana, and sometimes from the next room as she went about her daily routine; the sounds of her household and visitors; and the ambient sounds of her neighborhood in Triplicane, a few blocks in from the old "Ice House" on the beach and a few blocks south of the great Parthasarathy Temple. Above all, I can hear the sweet sound of her violin showing me the way, with its vigorous bowing, and the profound moments of discovery that came from her judicious use of long notes and silences among quicksilver passages. In such moments, she would often stop to explain, in a mixture of Telugu and Tamil, what she was doing, before summing up with an English phrase, uttered with the awe and wonderment that characterized her attitude toward life and music: "That is the beauty."

For more details on Dwaram Mangathayaru's life, see:

<https://www.sampspeak.in/2021/10/triplicane-heritage-dwaram-house.html>

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Thyagaraja Aradhana Concert by Dr. R. Suryaprakash

Revathi Subramony

Dr. R. Suryaprakash's Thyagaraja Aradhana concert — with strong accompaniment from BV Raghavendra Rao on violin and KH Vineeth on mridangam — made for a vibrant start to the Sruti year.



Dr. Suryaprakash began with Thyagaraja's evergreen composition Vasudevayani in Kalyani. Beautiful nereval in the charanam line Raga tala gatulanu paduchunu and an outpour of kalpanaswarams, true to his bani, set a great tone for the concert. He then presented two beautiful compositions: Samayamu ye marake in the rare and haunting raga Kalgada, and Sitavara sangeetha jnanamu in Devagandhari. Dr. Suryaprakash's Devagandhari alapana highlighted the raga's characteristic dheerga (elongated) Gandhara beautifully making for a satisfying alapana.

Next, he presented a novel perspective on Thodi (no mean feat!). Right from the start of the alapana, rather than only focusing on canonical Thodi phrases, Dr. Suryaprakash performed graha bedham (shifting the tonic note) to transition into Mohanakalyani. The contrast between the two ragas, though fleeting, dramatized the beauty and azhuththam of Thodi when he returned to it. Afterward, it was a pleasure to hear the krithi Ninnu vina sukhamugana (which is not often heard)

The highlight of the concert was Sarasa sama dana in Kapi Narayani — always a crowd favorite! After a brisk rendition of the krithi, Dr. Suryaprakash and the team built up to a high-energy climax with nereval in the familiar line Hithavu mata lento. Dr. Suryaprakash's rapid-fire sarvalaghu kalpanaswaras did full justice to his musical lineage: his guru Padmabhushan TV Sankarnarayanan and his paramaguru the legendary Madurai Mani Iyer. Sri Raghavendra Rao's vidwath and experience came through clearly as he kept the tempo going playing several beautiful fast phrases on the violin. Sri Vineeth's mridangam playing greatly uplifted this segment drawing a big applause from the audience.

Dr. Suryaprakash chose Kapi as the main. (I wish more artists would do the same!) His alapana outlined the many facets of this meandering, soothing raga. After a rendition of Intha soukhyamani ne, he again showcased his prowess in kalpanaswaram at the meaningful charanam line Svara raga laya sudha rasam, with koraiippu alternately ending in lower and higher Rishabam. Finally, Vineeth's energetic thani avarthanam, although short, rounded off this piece of the concert nicely.

Dr. Suryaprakash concluded the concert with several bhavam-filled thukudas: Vinana asakoni in the rare ragam Pratapavarali (a Harikamboji janyam), Vaidehi sahitam (dhyana shloka from the Ramayana) which he sang in pleasing ragas- Behag, Ahiri, Kedaragowlai and Neelamabari- transitioning into Ennaga manasuku rani. On the whole, a thoroughly enjoyable concert showcasing a spectrum of moods, from the dreaminess of Kapi to the vitality of Kapi Narayani.

Revathi Subramony is a Carnatic vocalist and Teacher and pursues a career in Clinical Pharmacy. She is a steadfast supporter and past president of SRUTI.

A razzle-dazzle by Abhishek-Karthik-Arjun Kumar

Jayram Sataluri

Live at Fugett Middle School, West Chester, PA (April 15th, 2023)

Abhishek Raghuram- vocal

Mysore Karthik Nagaraj- violin

Bangalore Arjun Kumar- mridangam

Rasika Sivakumar- tambura

Duration: 3 hours 24 mins

Audience: at least 100 people

- 1) sarasUDa ninnE kOri (varNam)- sAvEri, Adi, kothavAsal vEnkatarAmayya
- 2) nAdatanum aniSam- cittaranjani, Adi, tyAgarAja
- 3) shrI ramaNa vibhO- Arabhi, Adi, swAti tirunAL
- 4) sarva lOka dayA nidhE- husEni, rUpakaM, tyAgarAja
- 5) yadukula tilaka enduku nirdaya- cakravAkam, Adi (2 kalai), garbhapurivAsa (Karur Krishna Iyer aka Cinna DEvuDuKrishniah & Dakshinamurthy Sastri)
- 6) nanganallUr ezhundaruL- Anandabhairavi, Adi, pApanAsam Sivan
- 7) ETi janmam(i)di hA- varALi, miSra cApu, tyAgarAja
- 8) nATTai kurinji RTP (muralIdharA manOhara shrIdhara/shrIkara karunAkarA murahara moralinarA) w/ rAgamAlika (hindOLam, sAramati)- Adi (khanda Nadai) later Eka
- 9) kApi madhuripuNA (Ashtapadi)- kApi, Adi, JayadEva
- 10) Sri rAmacandra krpAlu bhajumana- yaman kalyAN, miSra cApu, TulsidAs

When Sruti announced that Abhishek Raghuram would be performing after over a decade, I knew I had to be there. This was my 4th time seeing him live after the Spring 1999 New Jersey, Fall 2017 Atlanta (with HN Bhaskar and Patri Satish Kumar) and Fall 2019 New Jersey (with HN Bhaskar and Arjun Kumar). Alongside him was Karthik Nagaraj (violin) and Arjun Kumar (mridangam).



After the brief intros of the artistes by Balaji Ragothaman, Abhishek immediately went to his trademark mandra sthAyi to quickly warm up. Then he sang a snippet of sAvEri before commencing with the famous varNam. He mostly sang it in the usual way I have heard other singers have rendered, but he did put his own spin on it whether it was him singing a few interludes or highlighting other notes. Yet the loud sound system prevented me from appreciating it fully. Abhishek noticed it too and afterwards, he asked the sound man to adjust it.

After the sound lowered to acceptable levels where Abhishek hummed his mandra sthAyi, he gave a brief alapana of cittaranjani and sang nAdatanum aniSam. I was pleased that he split the sahitya “nAdatanum aniSam Shankaram” and sang the swarAkshas the way BMK would do it. Other than that, it was rendered the usual traditional way. It would have been great if he had sung swarams, but luckily, he didn’t sing it as a filler either.

Next was Arabhi and here Abhishek shot out like a rocket. He was in gleeful experimental form where he explored every nook and cranny of Arabhi, revealing unheard dimensions of the rAgam. Though I could hear some hoarseness in his voice, his trademark brigas were in great display in the tAra sthAyi. Karthik was having trouble keeping up, but played a good Mysore-esque response. Abhishek took over and did another alapana in tAra sthAyi, desiring to bring out more new shades. Then he came back down to madhya sthAyi and sang “shrI ramaNa vibhO”, one of my favorite SwAti tirunAL krithis as popularized by BMK. He had sung in the 2019 New Jersey concert and it was great to hear it once more. He channeled the spirit of BMK while making his own mark on it. What I liked was that he sang the first charanam, “bhAla lOcana tAmarasAsana..” which I haven’t heard anyone render so far. After returning to the Pallavi, he then sang the famous “rAma sOdara durita samUha..” charanam and launched into swaraprastara where his mathematical brain came to the forefront. As he is one of the best in swaraprastara today, everyone paid rapt attention, eager to hear what his manodharma was going to conjure each time. After 5 to 10 minutes of splendid swarams spouting out of him, he took a break to catch his breath and drink water while Karthik played the charanam notes and Arjun Kumar maintained the kAlapramAna. He joined back, singing the entire charanam in one go and finished SwAti tirunAL’s piece on a high.

After that attractive Arabhi, he sang a brief husEni where he did a BMK “R2G2M1R2G2S R2N2S”, then started the song at the anupallavi. I wish he had sung the full krithi; other than the Pallavi and anupallavi, he sang the 4th and last charanams. He did his usual “aa” interludes whenever he felt like it.

After tuning the tambura for over a minute, he launched into cakravAkam. And if you asked others if they ever heard cakravAkam rendered like how he did it, they would reply in unison “Absolutely not!” He simply let his mind run loose. It was like a roller coaster ride with so many ups and downs and twists and turns. Like Arabhi, he did not miss anything in the rAgam; every swara note was explored 110%. Then during the middle, he took off his glasses and took us to a divine plane. He did go off tune once in tAra sthAyi, but his brigas just blew us away. Every time he did something new and breathtaking, the audience couldn’t control themselves from clapping spontaneously. You could hear “sabaash”, “balE”, “aa” and “tchu tchu” not just from audience members but Abhishek himself as he was completely taken in by cakravAkam. The final applause that came after Abhishek finishing in madhya sthAyi must have lasted nearly 30 seconds! Karthik had a lot of ground to cover, but the Mysore bAni came alive in him throughout. His posture and bowing were an exact replica of his father. When he played one string bowing during the faster portions, it brought back memories of hearing his father and uncle. Abhishek lauded him for his performance.

Then Abhishek sang a rare krithi I was hearing for the first time, “yadukula tilaka enduku nirdaya”. I later discovered it was popularized by the SSI bAni. One could find similarities between this krithi and TyAgarAja’s Enduku Nirdaya in Harikambhoji in terms of the krithi structure and sahitya. Perhaps this was GarbhapurivAsa’s tribute to TyAgarAja. But Abhishek disappointed me when he sang “enduku” as “endugu” and slurred at some points during the rendition. This was a result of his musical mind taking precedence over the sahitya and the bhAvam was not as deep as it should have been during the Pallavi and anupallavi. Yet he rebounded from that “mishap” when he started rendering the neraval line at the beginning of the charanam “vara muninuta pAda vAncita phalaprada” and from there it became another display of astonishing aptitude. Arjun Kumar who had simply been maintaining the kAlapramAna during the first hour, came alive and played terrific theermanams complementing the rock star. The swaraprastara that followed was a different beast altogether. Abhishek was on fire; the longer swaraprastara was spectacular, but the shorter swarams ending with a nyAsa swara D2 were even more mind-blowing. When he switched to khanda nadai 3rd speed, we just had to hold on for dear life! Karthik and Arjun Kumar followed him like shadows as Abhishek was hitting sixer after sixer with vehement force. He alternated between swarams and alapana moments and jumped between each sthAyi with ease. His final korvai was complex and captivating; blending the mathematical precision of the Raghu school, the daredevilry of TNS and “something new in the moment” which has some influence from D Seshachari of the Hyderabad Brothers. It goes like this:

G3R1S, G3R1G3R1S, R1SN2, R1SR1SN2, SN2D2, SN2SN2D2

G3R1,SN2D2, R1S, N2D2P, SN2,D2PM1 – this is equivalent to thadhin,kinathom

Noting that Karthik was dying to play a khanda nadai response, Abhishek let the former and Arjun Kumar go ahead where they dazzled for the next 2 minutes. Karthik displayed feats of melodic and technical acumen while Arjun Kumar’s exuberant mridangam complemented him. The duo did a mathematical korvai thrice which goes like this:

3 X (thadhinkinathom, tha , dhin , ki, na, thom) - G3R1SN2D2, G3 , R1 , S , N2 , D2 , RSN2D2P, R1 , S , N2 , D2 , P , SN2D2PM1, S , N2 , D2 , P , M1 ,

3 X (thadhinkinathom, tha, dhin, ki, na, thom) - G3R1SN2D2, G3, R1, S, N2, D2, RSN2D2P, R1, S, N2, D2, P, SN2D2PM1, S, N2, D2, P, M1,

3X (thadhinkinathom tha dhin ki na thom) - G3R1SN2D2 G3 R1 S N2 D2, RSN2D2P R1 S N2 D2 P, SN2D2PM1, S N2 D2 P M1,

3X (thadhinkinathom) *tha - G3R1SN2D2, RSN2D2P, SN2D2PD2N2

3X (thadhin,kinathom) *tha – R1S,N2D2P, SN2,D2PM1, N2D2,PM1G3M2

3X (tha,dhin,kinathom) *tha- G3R1,G3R1,G3R1SN2D2, SN2,SN2,SN2D2PM1, N2D2,N2D2,D2PM1G3R1

*tha is done once, so it's not part of the 3X.

After the spellbinding swaraprastara, the southpaw Arjun Kumar played a terrific thani. Inspired by the two younger men in front of him, his playing sounded like he was decades younger! His chapu was reminiscent of the great UKS. He started off in 1st kAlam chatusram and played around with the famous "ta thakadhindhinnatham..." korvai by playing a bit of miSram. Then he seamlessly transitioned to 2nd kAlam where he played some "nakadhimidhiminakanakadhimidhimi" variations before going to "nakatadhimithadhimimi" and "thathimithakatadhimithakadhimithakitathaka" that all mridangam students and practitioners would have byhearted and displaying more acumen there. His transition to tisra nadai displaying traits of both Pudukkottai and Tanjore schools was well done. His faster sollus were fabulous. Knowing he had to up his game, he did a miSram in tiSram like how the Pudukkottai school does it and played a variation of the korvai I have heard Trichy Sankaran perform to transition to a miSram for over a minute; I don't know if it's keezh kAlam miSram, you'll have to ask the laya experts. He displayed his speed during that miSram portion and he played a variation of the famous PMI korvai twice ending with 3 ferocious "thadhinkinathom dhin"s. One could clearly see sweat appearing from his forehead, but he showed no traces of exhaustion. His farans, mohara and korvai were trademarks of the Tanjore/UKS school which I was able to recognize while putting tAlam. After the tremendous thani, Abhishek took his time to go through the krithi highlighting GarbhapurivAsa's mudra and Arjun Kumar finished it off in style. The applause lasted for nearly a minute as we were so taken in by what we experienced.

Next Abhishek sang a brief Anandabhairavi and segued into a virutham rendition of the charanam line "un perumai onru mariye" of PapanAsam Sivan's nanganallur ezhundaruL before singing the krithi itself. This was the first time I was hearing it and Abhishek made the sahitya come alive. After the PapanAsam Sivan piece, he sang the anupallavi of ETi janmam(i)di hA which I had heard him render in Atlanta in 2017. Of course, that dreaded "gu" reared its head again in "enduku". But this time, Abhishek did bring a bit of bhAvam into it with his interludes and forays in tAra sthAyi. He sang the 1st and last charanams. There was fertile ground to do a neraval at "mATi mATiki jUci", but it didn't disappoint us that he didn't go there.

Next was a nifty nATTai kurinji where like Arabhi and Chakravakam, he couldn't sit still. Taking off his glasses, he moved his body in circles rapidly while executing lightning quick difficult brigas. Many times, he would be staring at his left hand or glancing at Karthik on his right. Then he transitioned impeccably to tAnam in a fast tempo, and he did sing it while giving Karthik his chances. Karthik displayed his flights of speed which did not sound jarring. Then after another lightning fast round, Abhishek gradually slowed down the tempo and softened his voice at the end of the tAnam. I loved how he hit the mandra shadja and easily jumped to madhya shadja. He let Karthik get the last note in the tAnam (mandra to madhya shadja) and complemented him with a tAra shadja with a bright smile on his face. Putting his glasses back on, Abhishek sang the famous Pallavi "muralIdharA manOhara shrIdhara/shrIkara karunAkarA murahara moralinarA" which I have heard from a Charsur recording of a Malladi Brothers concert in 2000. He actually started off by doing a Shashti Jaathi Thripata tALam (2 kalai) which was too complicated for anyone to handle; I saw before the uttarangam he did two thumb beats, so he deftly switched to Adi (Khanda nadai) where each beat was khanda cApu and the start of pallavi was at the 3rd beat of the last wave of Khanda cApued Adi. He intelligently incorporated hindOLam and sAramati into the Pallavi line. Then after going through the different kAlams of the Pallavi, he simplified the tALam to be an Eka (Khanda nadai) during the swarams. Another crafty ending korvai of swaraprastara full of mathematics and melody made us giddy with pleasure. Arjun Kumar played a short exuberant thani in the same kAlam.

Afterwards, Abhishek launched into JayadEva's kApi madhuripuNA in Kapi after the RTP. It was nice to hear it once more. He sang some Hindustani taans into it. His singing during "smara samarOcita.." and "shrI JayadEva bhaNita hari ramitam..." was well done. And the grand finale was Tulsidas's shrI rAmacandra krpAlu bhajumana in yaman kalyAN as rendered by past greats like Lata Mangeshkar. Abhishek alternated between crescendo and descrescendo and intertwined both schools of Bharatiya Sangeetham. Karthik and Arjun Kumar played softly and with sensitivity. Abhishek was so absorbed into the rAgam that he would sing taans here and there, especially at "khandarpa

agaNita..." and "bhaja dInabandhu...". The image of Tulsidas writing his magnum opus, Sri Ramcharitmanas came to my mind when he sang, "iti vadata tulasIdAsa...". Abhishek evoked the spirit of Lata when he sang "Shri rAm" between the transitions from the Pallavi to the charanams and towards the end. Arjun Kumar finished a soft theermanam.

To our surprise, Abhishek did not sing a Mangalam. Instead, he gave a small speech thanking Sruti for organizing this concert and saying that he was happy to be back in Philly after a long time. He also thanked his co-artists, the soundman and young Rasika for strumming the tambura. All of us applauded with fervor for over a minute while Siva came up on stage to give the Vote of Thanks. Most of us went to talk to the artists congratulating them for a glorious treat. They were humble and kind enough to take photos with all of us. One audience member told us that she drove down from New Jersey to see the rock star in action and that she couldn't miss it for the world.

Before the artists stepped outside Fugett, I witnessed Abhishek holding the shoulders of Karthik and Arjun Kumar during a pic and he once more recited "muralIdharA manOhara shrIdhara/shrIkara karunAkarA murahara moralinarA" pointing to each of them during the reciting, showing that he incorporated their names or part of them in the Pallavi line! It was truly sensational to see a virtuoso's mind at work.

Although I was not entirely satisfied with his sahitya rendering especially in Telugu and was worried about the hoarseness in his voice because of briga overuse, Abhishek delivers his 200%, guaranteeing the audience will have the time of their lives. The rock star is his own man; there's no need to call him the next GNB, next BMK or next TNS. After BMK, he can be considered as one of the masters of mandra sthAyi. If you want to call him the master of tAra sthAyi, by all means!

I believe that Abhishek's young spirit and desire to push the boundaries of music further is a good sign for Bharatiya Sangeetham. I hope he doesn't lose his voice due to his frequent experimentations and is practicing voice culture as he ages. This is essential if he wishes to have a long singing career. But there is no doubt he will be a future legend in Bharathiya Sangeetham.

The tall, towering Karthik has a promising future and with the blessings of his father and uncle, he will go far. Arjun Kumar, himself a child prodigy back in the 1970s, has adapted himself well to today's kutcheri paddhati and added more to his arsenal. He is a delight to see on stage. The state of Karnataka is blessed to have Karthik and Arjun Kumar represent their contribution to this deep musical heritage.

Overall, this was an exhilarating concert of the Sruti 2023 season.

Jayram Sataluri is a rasika and an ardent supporter of SRUTI.

Nirvriti—Shijith and Parvathy

Chitra Ramaswamy

During the long, dreary days of the pandemic many of us had forgotten what it feels like to attend a kutcheri in person. After plethora of online kutcheris which was a welcome change at the beginning during the quarantine days, it quickly became an overdose and I personally could not watch an online program for over 5 minutes without being distracted. No, it is not the artist who is responsible for that. It is that personal magic, that intimate touch that an in-person program gives the rasika. We had taken that for granted and never really valued it until we realized it's worth. A lesson well learnt and it is indeed gratifying as an artist to know that no matter how technology evolves, the age-old medium of communication still thrives on face to face interactions.



It was during such a time that Sruti, one of the premier organizations in the US, which brings about unique initiatives, brought to the area "Nirvrithi", a duet performance of Shri Shijith Nambiar and Smt Parvathy Menon. It was indeed a preparation getting to the venue. After years of mismatched outfits and unused sarees, it did feel like the first day of school selecting the best silk saree to be worn for the program. Traveling over 80 miles to the venue did not seem to be a chore. The malli poo smell that adorned the venue, the conversations with the familiar faces and the smiles from the unfamiliar ones added to the experience. As the lights went down and Parvathy's introduction started, the school which hosted the event transformed into a space that was like none other.



The duo started off with a Misra alarippu. Alarippu (which sadly is prevalent only in arangetrams) is a heavily under-rated dance item. Now-a-days the first item of a dance performance is seen as though it's a make-or-break moment where we often think we should leave the audience in awe at the get go. Hence, we come up with forced themes and abstract numbers just to create that effect. But this duo came up with this brilliant start with a very common alarippu which is known to any student of dance. With a simple, straight and a very neat presentation, they warmed themselves up while warming us of the fact that a simple alarippu presented right is all it takes to create the same impression that we all rack our brains for uniqueness.

After the brisk alarippu, they appeared on stage under two spotlights on either side with a serene virutham while the duo basked in bhakthi as devotees. The virutham slowly gave way to "Naamamrutha Paaname en jeevame endru nambineine" and what a brilliant way to begin a varnam instead of the usual entry with a nadai. The varnam progressed backwards from the third to the first line in a very subtle meditative mood and then the fireworks started. Shijith and Parvathy decided to do their jathis separately except for the first tri kala jathi. I asked him later for the reason and he said "It's nothing in particular. We just felt like it". Being in a duet performance is far more challenging than a solo because there is always one artist who draws us more than the other. Not because they are any less but at a given period of time, we can only be led by one artist and that keeps changing throughout the performance. Nevertheless, at a given time we only follow one. In that sense, keeping the jathis to each separately and with each bringing their own flavor of professionalism was a smart thought. Shijith with his electrifying footsteps, kanakkus and pauses and Parvathy with an answer so stylishly poised and yet making a powerful statement. The way they merge with one another at the end of their jathis was so immaculate. The sancharis have been so deeply thought of, carefully choreographed so as to bring the effect of Nandi expecting to hear the salangai, the bhaktha entering the temple hearing the Om that emanates from within, the elements that appeal to Shiva to be adorned by him and many facets and layers that we could peel as it unraveled. We reveled in their varnam along with them as they paraded us through the first half into the second half of the varnam. "NataRaja deva Sachidananda" was indeed apt for we were in the same state of Ananda like we were witness to a divine natyam.

Following the varnam, was Parvathy's solo "Jagadodarana". Though it's a piece we have seen and heard so many times, the piece was choreographed so beautifully as though Purandaradasa was reliving the episodes from Krishna's childhood. There is this particular moment which I can still recollect where Parvathy as Yasodha asks Krishna to get

down from the Kalinga's hood - the worry, the concern and love with her heart beating and racing until he got down was such a highlight. As a parent, I am sure we all go through those heart racing moments but to bring that on stage on demand so realistically is truly a mark of an artist who lives and breathes the character.

I would have never imagined a piece like "Swami Mayura Giri" being treated in a way Shijith handled it. To be able to step out of one's comfort zone and present a piece from the eyes of a non-human needs a lot of courage and skill. The way the peacock woke up in the morning and felt the cool water and the warmth from the sun, the nervousness ("for lack of word for paraparappu") of having woken up late and having to face Muruga and in that nervousness having traveled fast and getting a kuttu from Muruga. The many ways the peacock appeals to Muruga trying to pacify him was so endearing. While we were all wondering how one can think like this, Shijith was still on a roll where Muruga's romance with Valli was depicted only from the peacock's point of view leaving the entire scene at the expense of the viewer's imagination. What can be more uplifting and more brilliant than this where the audience is taught to imagine and delve into the scene. Sometimes, we are told that we have to be true to the composer's imagination but after seeing this thought process, I am wondering "why not". Doesn't our mind come up with various ideas and connections on reading a poem or a line? If we have the freedom to imagine that in someone's words, I believe the artist has full privilege to reimagine an author's poem. I am sure "Kavi Kunjara Bharathi" would have had a smile on his face watching this interpretation.

A befitting end was the purvi thillana which had its own set of surprises with varying speeds in music and dance deliveries. Shri Nagai Sriram on mridangam was electrifying and completely in sync with the duo and adding effect to the magic that was being created. Puneet Panda's excellent Jathi rendition and his command of the many complicated jathi and swara cross patterns was indeed a treat. Tanya Panda on vocals provided good support to the dancers. The young Vishveswar on flute was a delight to listen & watch as he himself danced while supporting the orchestra so soulfully.

Overall, the program indeed evoked the sense of Nirvrithi - complete satisfaction, bliss, happiness to every rasika present in the audience. I sure hope we don't have to wait another decade to watch this dynamic pair who are at the peak of their careers. I thank Sruti for urging me to write my thoughts on the program for it made me revel and relive those moments again.

Chitra Ramaswamy is a Bharatnatyam Dancer, choreographer and a teacher, trained under the legendary Padmasree Adayar K. Lakshman. Chitra is the artistic director of Sanskriti School of Dance in New Jersey. Chitra has toured various places in India for performances including solo and dance dramas.

Malladi Brothers Concert Review

Uma Sivakumar

Malladi Brothers, Vidwan Sri Sreeramprasad and Vidwan Sri Ravikumar, marked their return to the Sruti stage after five years with an outstanding concert on May 13, 2023, coinciding with Mother's Day. They were ably accompanied by Vidwan Sayee Rakshith on the Violin and Vidwan Tumkur Ravishankar on the Mridangam. The duo started with a lesser-known Varnam, ChaluvUda NinnE in Ananda Bhairavi, composed by Ambachatram Kannuswamy, capping off the caraNam with a flurry of crisp half Avarthanam swarams. Thyagaraja Swami's evergreen Hamsadhwani kriti, RaghunAyaka, was rendered with immense sowkyam at an ambient medium tempo and the swaram exchanges with the emphasis on the nishAdam were enjoyable.



A fantastic exposition of dEvaGAndhari was followed by “Sri KAmAkshi Shaila RAja Tanaye”, a krithi of Spencer Venugopal in Misra ChAppu, which the brothers indicated was notated by Sripada Pinakapani and taught by their father, Malladi Suri Babu through Sangeetha SikshanA program of All India Radio. Sayee Rakshith matched the brothers note for note all through the krithi. Next up was a briskly rendered dEvi Sri tuLasamma in Mayamalava Gowlai. Neraval was done on “pAvani brahmEndradhulu” and the swarams culminated in a simple yet impactful kOrvai with a combo of khandam, misram and sankeernam.

The highlight of the concert for me was a wonderful AlApana of DwijAvanthi by Sri Ravikumar. ChEtasri BALakrishnam was the song of choice, with some beautifully woven swarams at “nava thulasi vanamAlam” with variations of the “ni sa dhA ni rI” phrase. ika kAvalasinadEmI in BalahamsA was the loosener before the duo launched into the main piece of the evening – a beautiful mOhanam AlApana followed by a briskly rendered mOhana rAmA of Saint ThyAgarAjA. Swarams were rendered in two speeds at the Pallavi line. Tumkur Ravishankar played a thundering thani - the subtle and deceptively simple transitions to thisram with a nicely woven reductive kOrvai were delectable and the fast paced thisram sequences with multiple 9+3 combinations were equally delightful. Following this was the pApanAsam Sivan masterpiece, Kumaran tAL PanindhE in Yadukula KhAmbOji.

The rAgam-tAnam-Pallavi for the evening was in Nasikabhushani set to Chathusra Jhampa thALam, khanda nadai with eduppu after 8 mAthras. The Pallavi “pAhimam Sri rAjarAjeshwari KripAkari Shankari” was also fittingly chosen as a Mother’s Day tribute. rAgamalika swarams were rendered in Reetigowlai, Valachi, Lalitha, Janaranjani, and finally Sivaranjani (bringing back fond memories of their beautiful Sivaranjani ending for the misra thriputai Pallavi from their older Sruti concert). The brothers then presented a nice mix of semi-classical songs starting with BadrAchala rAmdas’ “TakkuvEmi Manaku” in sUryakAntham followed by PurandaradAsA’s “KandEnA gOvindanA” in mAnd. Narayana Theerthar’s “pAhipAhimam paramakripAlo” in JhOnpuri and the kAsi Sivan Krithi, Hey VishwanAtha in PahAdi were both presented soulfully. The duo then engaged the audience in an interactive sing-along with “NarAyanathe NamO NamO”. The concert ended with “ChandrasEkarA IshA” in Sindhu Bhairavi.

Malladi Brothers are known for their impeccable adherence to classicism and patAnthram, and as always left an indelible mark with yet another outstanding concert true to their principles and legacy. Thanks to the Sruti board for presenting the Brothers again.

Uma Sivakumar is a Carnatic music singer and teacher, avid rasika, past president and a long-time supporter of SRUTI.

Shruthi Ramesh Bala Bhavam Concert Review

Rasika Sivakumar

On Saturday, May 20th, 2023 at Fugett Middle School, Sruthi Ramesh, a student of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyashankar, gave a concert for Sruti's Bala Bhavam series with a flavorful selection of compositions. She was accompanied by Vishaal Sowmyan on the violin and Vaibhav Sowrirajan on the mridangam.

Sruthi commenced her performance with a scintillating invocation of Shree MahAgaNapathy ravathumAm in gowLa rAgam set to Adhi thALam, a composition of one of the renowned Musical Trinity: Saint MuddhuswAmi DhIkshithar. This song is one of the traditional starters for the kamalAmbA navAvarNa krithis rendition. In strict adherence to her paddathi, Shruthi repeated every sangathi twice with utmost sincerity, a good habit she continued throughout her concert.

A crisp AlApanA followed, highlighting jeeva phrases of the 64th mElakarthA rAgam, vAchaspathi. During his solo, Vishaal complemented the performance by ending his AlApanA with the phrasing disguised as the start of ParAthparA. This popular krithi is set to dhEshAdhi thAlam and is a composition of the Shri PapanAsam Shivan, often referred to as the Thamizh ThyAgaiyya. Despite the peppy kAlapramAnam, Shruthi and her team maintained the tempo very well. Nereval and kalpanA swarams were rendered at the starting line of the charanam: 'ari ayanum kANA ariya jOthi'. Creative neraval was executed and Shruthi concluded the krithi with a crisp kuraippu followed by a well-structured kOrvai.

To contrast the vibrance of shringAra rasA of vAchaspathi, Shruthi presented ThyAgarAja yOga vaibhavam, a unique composition of DhIkshithar in the rAgA Anandhabhairavi set to a sedate thisra Ekam (2 kalai), featuring the gOppuccha and shrOthOvAha yathis in lyrical measure. Accompaniment was soothing and gelled along well with the mood of the krithi.

The main piece of Shruthi's concert was in madhyamAvathi rAgA- venkatEsha ninnu- a rare composition of another member of the Musical Trinity and arguably the most celebrated: Saint ThyAgarAja. Shruthi explained that this song was one of only two songs composed by the saint on Lord VenkatEshwarA, the latter being tharatheeyagarAdhA. In the AlApanAs of both Shruthi and Vishaal, I couldn't help but notice the beautiful arpeggios that followed the basic major chord 1-3-5 interval of Western music. Intricate kannakus were weaved at the pallavi line (thakita eduppu). The thani by Vaibhav showcased a brief but brisk kaNda nadai often found in the playing of mridangam maestro Sangeetha KalAnidhi UmayAlapuram ShivarAman.

After the main piece, Shruthi and her team performed lilting Chelimini in rAgam yamunAkalyAni. At some parts, it resembled maithreem bhajatha. Without ado, Shruthi concluded the concert with the renowned and auspicious thyAgarAja mangaLam.

The concert was overall excellent and was executed with the same level of energy all through. These youngsters have amazing talent and a bright future in the field of Carnatic music.

Rasika Sivakumar is a rising high school sophomore and a member of the SRUTI Youth Group. She is an avid student of Carnatic music and a disciple of Sangeetha KalAnidhi Neyveli Sri R. SanthAnagopAlan.

What a lovely evening with the Carnatic quartet

Dinakar Subramanian

I have been following the group 'A Carnatic Quartet' on social media for some time now and was thoroughly enjoying their jam sessions and very slickly created snippets of popular songs. The group was conceptualized by violinist Shreya Devnath and consists of nadaswaram vidwan Mylai Karthikeyan and percussionists Praveen Sparsh on the mridangam and Gummidipoondi Jeevanandham on the tavil.

I was really looking forward to their US tour. I even attended their concert in New Jersey just a few weeks before the Sruti concert. The whole idea of two instruments such as the violin and nadaswaram together is unique and novel by itself and the blending with a mridangam and an atonal instrument like the tavil made it even more special.



How they wove together a symphonic rendering that evening at the Fugett Middle School was pure magic. We have all heard different instrumental jugalbandis including instruments such as the veena, flute, violin etc but a violin and a nadaswaram was a first for Sruti. I was also apprehensive about how the sound of the nadaswaram which is naturally loud would fit in with the rest of the instruments. My fears were unfounded as the Sruti audio team did a great job of ensuring that all the instruments were well-balanced and the resultant sound was euphonic.

Fun fact: The last time Sruti had a nadaswaram concert was in June of 2008 with Sri Kasim and Sri Babu (grandsons of the legend Dr. Sheik Chinna Moulana).

As the quartet has been doing for many of their concerts, they started with a mallari - a traditional nadaswaram piece played during South Indian temple rituals. This majestic piece in the raga gambhira nAttai made a strong impact right from the start of the concert with its brisk pace. This piece composed by Mylai Karthikeyan was set to sankIrNa jhampa talam in khanda nadai took people back to their earlier music lessons to count the beats in the whole cycle.

Anai Ayya's inta parAkA in mAyamALavagowlai followed which offered a brilliant improvisation in the kalpanaswarams with many variations derived from the sapta tAla alankarams and ending in a wonderful crescendo korvai.

A classical AlapanA in bEgadA for about 10 min seamlessly played between Shreya and Karthikeyan set the stage for Ramaswamy Sivan's kadaikkaN vaithennai pArammA.A brilliant and prolonged kalpanaswaram exchange at the caraNam tanjamenbOr tammai nOkki capped off a very memorable bEgadA composition. A slow mridangam beat by Praveen for about half a minute introduced the mellow anupallavi of Thyagaraja's mOkshamU galadA at sAkSat kAranI which was a unique start to the beautiful sAramatI composition.

Papanasam Sivan's unnaittudikka aruL tA in kuntalavarALi - a very lilting tamizh kriti with a very catchy use of the second akshara prasam like unnai, ponnai, cinnatanam etc. was the bridge between bEgadA and bilaharI pieces.

Thyagaraja's nA jlvAdhAra in bilaharI was the main piece and the AlapanA started off with the starting notes of the famous swarajati - rA rA venu and then went into a solid and complete description of the rAgA with appropriate nuanced uses of the kaishiki nishAdam (N2) that is an anya swara for this ragam. Mylai Karthikeyan excelled in the tAra sthayi passages in the Alapana with ease. As the kriti began, Shreya and Mylai Karthikeyan presented an exhaustive pallavi with many sangatis and the whole song was reminiscent of Shreya's guru Lalgudi Jayaraman's and Shrimati's rendition of the same kriti from a yesteryear recording. The kalpanaswara exchange also reminded me of a Lalgudi concert. Kudos to her for showcasing her patantaram.

The icing of the concert cake in addition to the whole synergistic presentation of the music by this unique set of musicians was the tani avartanam. The percussionists decided to enhance the tani by performing the konnakOl - which is the art of performing percussion syllables vocally. Praveen and Jeeva in turn played and vocalized the syllables that added a new dimension to the concert. The tani with the konnakOl has not happened for Sruti very often and the audience were mesmerized by this treat.

A pensive Rabindra Sangeet - mallikA bOnE in rAgamAlikA led to KanakadAsa's bArO kriSnayyA started rounding out the lighter pieces of the concert. Given Shreya's Lalgudi tradition, I was eagerly waiting for one of her gurus tillAnAs and was thrilled when the artists started playing the dES tillAnA - released initially in the Dance of Sound album by Lalgudi Jayaraman in 1978. This evergreen tillAnA definitely brought back memories and the artists offered a few rounds of elaboration to complete this lovely piece.

These four performers engaged the audience with a cozy and most pleasurable performance, leaving me feeling especially happy. The stitching together of these unique instruments and delivering such a class performance is a testament to their skill and musicality. Their camaraderie on stage only added to the enjoyment of the audience.

Dinakar Subramanian is a long-time resident of the Philadelphia area, an avid rasika and musician and has served in various capacities on the SRUTI Board.

Sudha Ragunathan

Tyagarajan Suresh

The evening of June 3rd, 2023, with 'Sangita Kalanidhi' 'Padma Bhushan' Sudha Ragunathan, was a memorable experience indeed for the connoisseurs of yester-years as well as the young and aspiring music lovers who deeply enjoy the creative and innovative angle of Carnatic music. What was remarkable is Sudha's ability to sustain her energy level consistently from the beginning to the end of this wonderful concert.



Sudha commenced the concert with the KhamAs (daru VarNam) with all the gait it deserves. This was followed by a heart melting viruttam in NAttai “Sri RAghavam DasarAtmAjam Apprameyam”. This was a prelude to ‘Jaya JayA’ by Purandara DAsar. It contained unique kalpanA swaram patterns with Ni (nishAdam) as a focal point in NAttai. We were then taken through a classical listening experience of RAKA Sashivadhanay – in takka. The rendition of the next item, Janani Ninnuvina in Reetigoulai was in many ways a fresh reminder of the touches of the Late Sri GNB – TAmasamunu in second speed with ¼ yedam (spaced) yeduppu (spaced forward from the start of the tAla cycle)

was a notable highlight, exhibiting Sudha’s prowess of manOdharma. This was followed by a well-rendered Kanden Seethayai in Vasantha. SankarAbaraNam essay for the next song SwaraRaga Sudha– traversing across octave(s) in the rendition was a memorable landmark in the concert. Sudha adopted Graha Bhedam. Neraval and kalpanA swaras were beautifully built at the point of MoolAdhAra in the song. There were interesting converging and diverging patterns of swaras ending in Pa (Panchamam). Rajeev Mukundan (violin) blended exquisitely with the style and substance of Sudha. Akshay (Mrdangam) provided a brisk Tani as an icing on the cake.

The relatively short yet sweet RTP (Ragam Tanam Pallavi) in BrindAvani was a specially designed one: Pallavi – “Surya (The Sun) PrabhAkara Mihira”, set to KandajAdhi Triputa tAlam (starting with 2 kaLais and then moved on to 1 kaLai). The highlight of this design was that it was strung together in rAgAs [Priyadarshini (S R2 M1 D1 N3 S – S N3 D1 M1 R2 S), SooryA (S G3 M1 D1 N2 – S N2 D1 M1 G3 S), NAgaswarAvali (S(P) G3(N3) (S) P(R2) D2(G3) S(P) – S(P) D2(G3) P(R2) M1(S) G3(N3) S(P)) (with Graha Bhedam in Hamsadwani {another pentatonic rAgam when Sa shifts to Ma}), Revathi (S R1 M1 P N2 S – S N2 P M1 R1 S)] - depicting the colors of sunlight (Sun God’s horses). Interestingly, at the climax of the swaras, Sudha brought in the BrindAvani TillAnA pattern into the kalpanA swaras. Sudha’s layam (rhythm) mastery was subtly showcased during the transition to “Priyadarshini” with different permutations of sankeerNams (3*3, 4+5 for 9 counts and 3*2 plus 3*4 for 18 counts). All in all, the RTP was a magnificent display of Sudha’s repertoire of skills in every department of the art form. A smooth flow of popular demand numbers such as Hari SmaraNe MAdO, BhO ShambO, KAvadichindu and ChinnajirukiLiyE, that ensued thereafter, aptly complemented the earlier segment of the concert as an aural treat.

PraNams and hats off to Sudha for weaving together a cleverly-navigated experience that had the sparks of the vintage Sri GNB and Dr MLV with a judicious blend of her own style, exhibiting dynamism, exceptional motifs and matrices of rAgA images.

Thanks to SRUTI for bringing in such wonderful experience to the core Carnatic music lovers of the community.

Tyagarajan Suresh (‘Suresh’) is a Carnatic Music lover, an active SRUTI participant and a Vainika in the Philly area.

Veena Violin Duet Concert

Concert by Ramana Balachandran (Veena) & Kamalakiran Vinjamuri (Violin)

With Patri Satishkumar (Mridangam) Sowmiya Narayanan (Ghatam)

Tyagarajan Suresh

The SRUTI audience were just soaked in the nectar of Carnatic Music flowing abundantly with the talent of two youngsters on their strings, on the evening of 16-SEP-2023 at West Chester, PA. The accompanists, Satishkumar and Sowmiya Narayanan, adeptly matched the brilliance of the main duo artists.



The concert began with Sri Balamuralikrishna's bright Sri Sakala GaNAdhipa in Arabhi. One was intrigued by the way one tAla string was tuned to the Rishabham (Ri) of the rAgA scale. A brief rAgA essay blending into a ThAnam mode and beginning with the Pallavi was a notable, refreshing experience.

The duo then unfurled Sobillu in JaganmOhini in its full vigor. RAga essay alternating between the two prodigies was such an audio-visual treat. Ramana's rendition was punctuated by seemingly effortless glides and deep, authentic gamakAs. The kriti itself took off at a fast tempo with impressive patterns throughout the verses. The kalpanA swaras were also briskly articulated with interesting exchanges between Ramana and Kamalakiran. This phase was one of the several examples of the synergy between the two main performers. The percussionists provided matching fireworks from the stage at every deserving juncture. Those junctures were countless and hitting home with every rasika in the audience.

The artists then took the audience into inta soukhyamani. The sculpting of soul melting Kapi was exquisite. Here again the synergy was overflowing from the stage and filling up the entire auditorium. With the Veenai, one could notice that one tAla string was tuned to the Rishabham (Ri) of the rAgA scale. They began the kriti with the anupallavi 'dAnta sItAkAnta..' and beautifully cycled back to the pallavi. They presented slow, medium, high, ultra-high-speed

rAgA and swara phrases (it truly lived up to the standard of the caraNam lyrics “SwararAgasudhA Rasa”) all distilled to gourmet perfection with utmost precision.



The main piece was a pallavi composed by Sri. Kamalakiran. "Sri chakrarAja simhAsaneswari sri lalithAmbike Amma" in Adi tAlam (with shifted start of cycle) containing ragas chenchuruti, punnAgavarALi, nAdanAmakriyA; was built on the kriti “SrichakrarAja”’s rAgA landscape. The tAnam flourish was remarkable, flowing from both the sets of strings. The stunned audience paused till the very end of the various sections for their well-deserved applause offering. The Pallavi consisted of yeduppu 5 syllables and aridhi 10 syllables. We also enjoyed a harmonious blend of vocal singing by both the youngsters. As part of the swaras for the pallavi, we enjoyed generous sprinkling of YamunA KalyaNi, Sindhu Bhairavi and PahAdi. The climax was aesthetically built up by both the players with an intricate weave of all the rAgAs and a medley of rhythm patterns.

The Indo-American duo then took up the effervescent DwijAvanti TillAnA of Sri Balamuralikrishna to start putting the finishing touches to the landmark concert in SRUTI’s journey. One must say that the duo never ceased to amaze the avid Carnatic Music connoisseur. One came out of the concert with an out-of-the-world anointment of pure, essential, adequate dose of artistry galore.

As with all great events, this one also had to wind down. The concert concluded with a MangaLam and a long well-deserved standing ovation.

Tyagarajan Suresh (‘Suresh’) is a music lover, an active SRUTI participant and a VaiNika in the Philly area.

Concert by Anahita & Apoorva Ravindran

Dinakar Subramanian

Sruti joined forces with the Philadelphia Ganesh Festival again this year and presented a scintillating sister duo vocal concert through Anahita and Apoorva. This was held at the Bharatiya temple in Montgomeryville, Pa. Sruti Sarathy on the violin, Akshay Anantapadmanabhan on the mridangam and Sowmiya Narayanan on the ghatam were the accompanists.



People streamed in after the devotional activities earlier to get ready for a musical evening. It being the Ganesh festival, as expected the vocalists started the concert with the Nattai kriti by Muthuswami Dikshitar - **mahAgaNapatim manasA smarAmi**. Oothukaadu Venkata Subbaiyer's **swAgatham kRSNa** in Mohanam in Tisra nadai Adi talam gave the concert a nice oomph with its lilting pace. Shyama Sastri's Punnavarali kriti **kanakashaila vihAriNi** provided a pensive change to the previous lilt.

After some audio adjustments, Apoorva started a lovely exposition of Pantuvarali and as a nice change handed it over to Sruti, the violinist who just exploded with some absolutely mind-blowing sancharas. Pantuvarali as a

ragam, lends itself to a lot of dhatu prayogams and Sruti showed her mastery of the ragam and the instrument. Her alapana had touches of the Parur school though her training was not in that school which I found quite fascinating. Her alapana had such a fresh approach which really impacted the audience that they broke into a spontaneous applause after her alapana. Anahita took over after the violin and explored much of the tAra sthAyi passages of the raga and delivered some scintillating brigas. It seemed she would enter the world of graha bedham with her notes but she didn't.

Thyagaraja's Kovur pancharatna kriti **SambhO mahA dEva** was the kriti rendered. Neraval was at Shambo Mahadeva as opposed to the variation of the start of the caranam - parama dayA-kara mRga dhara. Anahita, Apoorva and Sruti exchanged some tight and fast paced neraval phrases and kalpanaswarams. I felt that the whole audience was taken on an exhilarating, heart-racing and wonderful journey in this phase of the exposition. To me, it showed their vidwat, depth and control over the whole concert. This was clearly the high point of the concert in my opinion.

Akshay's tani followed with great dexterity joined by Sowmiya Narayanan's ghatam. Akshay was on pace for every kriti and showed his skill throughout the concert. Taking into account the concert was part of a devotional festival, Anahita and Apoorva then delivered several lilting bhajans including rAma bhajan karo in raga Jog which had some lovely interludes by Sruti. An brisk **abhang maazey pandari** was a palpable crowd pleaser. Mirabai's **payOji mainey** and Surdas's **hE gOvinda hE gOpala** rounded out the list of bhajans.

An icing on the concert cake was a beautiful rendering of Chitravina Ravikiran's (their guru) composition **pAvana sumanESa ranjana** in sumanesharanjani - a lilting pentatonic janya raga of the 56th melakarta - Shanmukhapriya. Swati Tirunal's ever popular Dhanashri thillana completed the very satisfying concert. The audience left with a sense of surfeit from the music.

Dinakar Subramanian is a long-time resident of the Philadelphia area, an avid rasika and musician and has served in various capacities on the SRUTI Board.

Mesmerizing Kuchipudi Recital Enthralls Audiences

Madhavi Ratnagiri

Over the years Sruti has organized many a dance performance by eminent artists in the field, each one of which I have deeply enjoyed and treasured. However, the performance on September 30th by Sri. Jaikishore and Smt. Padmavani Mosalikanti was particularly special for me. With its focus on Kuchipudi's classical foundations, it felt close to my heart. The program thoughtfully highlighted Kuchipudi's classical roots and Telugu heritage. This was evident in the repertoire with compositions by legendary Telugu composers like Thyagaraja, Annamacharya and Padma Bhushan Dr. Balamurali Krishna. Every choice celebrated Kuchipudi's lineage. I was profoundly moved by this tribute to the classical core of my beloved art form.



What does Kuchipudi signify? Ask a layman and they will tell you it is the dance on a brass plate, but it is so much more. It is a classical dance form rooted in the principles of the Natyashastra, encompassing elements of drama, rhythmic footwork and elegant movements. It is vivacious, fast-paced and despite its vibrant nature, I have often pondered why Kuchipudi is not widely embraced by the general public. On that particular day, I finally found the answer to my question.

The show opened with the legendary Dr. Balamurali Krishna's exhilarating composition "Pari Pari Nee PaadaMe" in raga Hamsadhwani and set to Adi taal. This dynamic piece set the vibrant tone for the evening. The choreography was filled with captivating footwork and elegant movements which the couple performed with flawless unison and precision. Their presentation

brimmed with the exuberance and vitality that epitomizes Kuchipudi's energetic essence.

Next in line was Sri. Jaikishore's captivating solo performance of Guru Vempati Chinna Satyam's iconic masterpiece, "Ksheera Saagara Sayana," a composition by Saint Thyagaraja in raga Devagandhari and Adi Talam. Just as this gem of a composition gives a singer the scope to showcase their competency, Vempati mastergaru's thoughtful open-ended choreography gives tremendous scope for the dancer to showcase their prowess with abhinaya and storytelling. And that is precisely what Kishore accomplished with his masterful presentation. As he stepped onto the stage, it felt as though he was holding a lamp, evoking the image of Thyagaraja entering his prayer room at the break of dawn. As Kishore took his seat, the audience could sense the impending agony and profound emotions that Thyagaraja likely experienced before penning this piece.



The dance performance incorporated various sancharis, which are expressive elements used to convey the essence of the lyrics through descriptive illustrations of scenes or stories. The first sanchari depicted the episode of Gajendra Moksha, where Gajendra the king of the elephants is attacked by a crocodile. While I have witnessed this portrayal numerous times, it was during this performance that I truly witnessed the slew of emotions Gajendra might have

experienced while grappling with this formidable adversary. I could see the shock, confusion, terror and desperation which enabled me to envision Gajendra's state of mind when trapped by the crocodile.



This was only the tip of the iceberg as the performance delved into many other captivating scenes. The scene of Draupadi vastrapaharanam is a complex situation involving multiple characters, including the malicious Duryodhana, the wise Yudhishtra, the reckless Dushasana, the cunning Shakuni, and the hapless Draupadi. Portraying each character and seamlessly transitioning between them is a challenge even for the most seasoned dancers, but Kishore executed it with artistry. When he transformed into the character of Shakuni and walked with a limp across the stage, the audience couldn't help but express their awe. It was evident that Kishore had captivated the undivided attention of the audience. I also admired his subtle approach in depicting the feminine role and conveying the profound helplessness of Draupadi.

In another segment of the performance, Kishore depicted a scene from the Ramayana where Sita is abducted by Ravana. He skillfully portrayed Ravana's cunning disguise as a sage to entice Sita into crossing

the Lakshmana Rekha. In this scene Kishore intentionally forgets to alter Ravana's natural aristocratic walk to that of a mendicant's humble gait, adding a subtle touch of humor to an otherwise serious and intense scene. This creative element included by the choreographer showcased his imaginative approach in infusing light-heartedness into a somber moment. There were numerous such subtle nuances throughout the performance that could be discussed at length. Overall, it was a deeply moving portrayal that was truly a visual delight for the audience.

The solemn and theatrical portrayal was followed by a contrasting cheerful, lively dance - What better way to showcase the versatility of Kuchipudi and its ability to be adapted both to serious, stylized performances as well as lighthearted, casual portrayals. Smt. Padmavani Mosalikanti followed up with the Annamacharya kriti, "Palluku thenala Thalli", in ragam Aabheri and Adi talam, portraying the shyness and grace of goddess Padmavathi. She portrayed the coyness and the daintiness of the goddess with dexterity. Her expressive eyes darting amorously and the lovesick sideways glance when speaking of her lord will forever be etched in my memory. Her tender, flirtatious glances embodied Padmavathi's devoted adoration.

After the wonderful performances so far had whet our appetite, then came the highlight of the evening's performance, Durga Tarangam. This piece truly showcased the essence of Kuchipudi. Kishore's vibrant choreography elevated the traditional tarangam into an unforgettable dramatic experience, exemplifying Kuchipudi's storytelling aspect.

The scene of Durga receiving weapons from the gods was a visual delight, nicely symbolizing her preparation for battle. Smt. Padmavani portrayed Durga with skill, effortlessly showing the goddess's compassion for her devotees as well as her fierce aggression towards the demon Mahisha. The fight between Durga and Mahisha looked so vivid and spontaneous. When Durga kicked the demon, sending Kishore dramatically falling backwards, it was a breathtaking, stunning moment. Beyond the organic, beautiful choreography, their meticulous attention to detail made the performance unforgettable. The piece concluded with the crowd-pleasing traditional dance on a brass plate, performed with dynamism and energy.

The couple ended the recital with a Thillana, in ragam Behag, set to Adi Talam, another composition by Dr. M. Balamurali Krishna. The duo displayed their mastery over intricate footwork, executed swift turns and leaps with agility and grace. The complex rhythms on the mridangam and nattuvangam intertwined seamlessly with the dancers' movements. Their energy resonated, bringing the atmosphere to a dynamic crescendo. It was a triumphant grand finale to the exhilarating show.

The dancers were accompanied by a talented team of musicians - Sri. Puneeth Panda on nattuvangam, Smt. Tanya Panda on vocals, Sri. Sai Kishore on flute, and Sri. B.P. Haribabu on mridangam and Ananda Krishna on the violin. Puneeth and Tanya Panda made a skilled duo, with her vocal mastery and his rhythmic nattuvangam. Sai Kishore's flute provided melodic flourishes; Ananda Krishna illuminated with his violin while Haribabu was scintillating on mridangam. These accomplished musicians provided the perfect complementary accompaniment to the dancers. Their collaboration truly enhanced the overall performance. Further, the lighting effects created an ambient atmosphere that nicely augmented the performance.

Even weeks later, everyone I spoke with raved about how enjoyable the entire performance was. It truly showed how Kuchipudi can captivate audiences when presented by the right ambassadors. The overwhelming positive response proved this style can absolutely gain mainstream popularity as well as the appreciation of the dance connoisseurs through charismatic performers. Based on the enthusiastic reactions still evident long afterwards, this event demonstrated Kuchipudi has the power to delight people when shared by dedicated virtuosos.

I have known Sri. Jaikishore Mosalikanti since our childhood days studying under our guru. Over time, my respect and admiration for him has only grown. He not only embodies our master's style in technique and execution, but also continues his choreographic legacy. As students of Vempati Chinna Satyam, Jaikishore and Padmavani stay true to our guru's classical foundations while also innovating and advancing the art form.

My heart brims with pride that the Mosalikantis are the torch bearers of Kuchipudi and promote its beauty and authenticity with sincerity and dedication.

Madhavi Ratnagiri is a talented exponent of the classical Indian dance styles Kuchipudi and Bharatnatyam. She was trained in Kuchipudi under the eminent guru Padma Bhushan Dr.Vempati Chinna Satyam and learned Bharatnatyam from the distinguished Padma Bhushan Dr.Padma Subrahmanyam. Through her dance school Kalaananda, Madhavi passes on the rich tradition of Kuchipudi to the next generation of aspiring dancers, inspiring them with her artistry and passion.

Review of Sriranjani Santhanagopalan's Concert by an Informed Rasika

The air was filled with anticipation as the audience gathered in the beautiful auditorium at Montgomery Community College, eagerly awaiting the performance of one of the most sought-after vocalists in the carnatic music circuit, Sriranjani Santhanagopalan, with Sayee Rakshit on the violin and Praveen Sparsh on the mridangam. Blessed with a mellifluous voice and with strong command over the technical aspects of Carnatic music, Sriranjani is highly appreciated by musicians, critics and rasikAs for her adherence to tradition while bringing out new dimensions in her renditions.



Commencing with a varnam in Asaveri composed by Patnam Subramania Iyer, Sriranjani also rendered kalpanaswarams for the charanam line, showcasing the fluidity in her voice and setting the stage for what was to come for the rest of the evening. She then proceeded to sing Thyagraja's composition Thelisarama in Poornachandrika. Presenting at a very brisk pace and with a lot of clarity, Sriranjani showed clearly how much effort she puts to ensure swara-suddham in rendering fast-paced phrases. Sayee was

able to respond effortlessly on the violin to the different swara patterns, with Praveen demonstrating his dexterity with nice finishes at the end of each cycle.

The audience was treated to a fairly elaborate alapana of Bilahari, followed by Maa Mayura Meedhil, a composition of Mazhavai Chidambara Bharathi. Sriranjani presented the raga in its full glory, bringing out many subtleties. She then proceeded to present a chatur-dasa ragamalika composition of Muthuswamy Dikshithar, Sri Viswanatham Bhajeham. Another gem of a creation, with fourteen different ragams factored in this piece by the illustrious composer, Sriranjani took enormous care to maintain the kalapramanam to deliver with emotion throughout while transitioning through the many verses. Both Sayee and Praveen followed the vocalist very closely to embellish the rendition.

After rendering Shyama Sastri's composition Parvathi ninu Ne in Kalgada, Sriranjani launched Todi alapana for the main piece for the evening. Traversing effortlessly between three different octaves, the ragam was beautifully rendered by the vocalist, demonstrating a lot of breadth control and ease in handling fast-paced phrases. Ninne Namminaanu, another Shyama Sastri's composition was chosen for the evening. Nereval and swarams for the line Kamakshi Kanchadhalayadakshi were presented extensively with Sayee shadowing and complementing very well. Praveen played an excellent thani avarthanam, weaving misra nadai and thisra nadai korvais and clearly showcasing many nuances of the Pudhukottai style of mridangam-playing.

Sriranjani then presented an Abhang, Bhakta Jana Vatsala, in Brindavani, bringing out the myriad of sensitivities encapsulated in the different stanzas in the composition. A composition of Papanasam Sivan in Kapi, Sodhanai Smaikkuvezhai was rendered prior to Sriranjani concluding the concert with a thillana (also in Kapi ragam) in Lakshmis talam, composed by Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar. With very good rapport between the artists, the performance was very enjoyable for the evening.

Bravura performance by Akkarai Sisters-Sankaranarayanan-Chandrasekara Sharma

Jayram Sataluri

Live at Fugett Middle School, West Chester, PA (October 28th 2023)

Akkarai Sisters (Subhalakshmi and Sornalatha) - violin (w/ some vocal)

R Sankaranarayanan – mridangam

G Chandrasekara Sharma - ghatam

Shishir Kumar- tambura

Duration: 2 hours 46 minutes

Audience: 70 to 80 people

- 1) vanajAkSi ninne kOri- kalyANi, aTa, Pallavi Gopala Iyer
- 2) vallabhA nAyakasya- bEgaDa, rUpakaM, Muthuswami Dikshitar
- 3) kana kana rucirA- varALi, Adi (2 kalai), Thyagaraja
- 4) lalitE Sri pravRddhE- bhairavi, Adi, Thyagaraja
- 5) heccarikagA rArA- yadukulakAmbhOji, khanda cApu, Thyagaraja
- 6) nenaruncarA nApaini- siMhavAhini, dESAdi, Thyagaraja
- 7) Sri kAntimatiM- hEmAvati, Adi (2 kalai), Muthuswami Dikshitar
- 8) Saranam Saranam candraSEkhara- madhuvanti, miSra cApu, Akkarai Sornalatha
- 9) mAnD thillAna– Adi, Lalgudi G Jayaraman
- 10) nambik-keTTavar- hindOLaM, Adi, Papanasam Sivan
- 11) nI nAma rUpamulaku- saurAshTraM, Adi, Thyagaraja
- 12) brief suraTi AlApana

The quad of Akkarai Sisters (Subhalakshmi and Sornalatha), R Sankaranarayanan and Chandrasekara Sharma gave a bravura performance at Fugett Middle School on October 28th. Commencing with the Kalyani Ata tAla varNam, they did 3 kAlas in the Pallavi, anupallavi and muktAyai swarams; the 3rd round in khandam was noteworthy. Following was vallabhA nAyakasya, Dikshitar's short yet beauteous ode to Lord Ganesha where the sisters brought back memories of past masters rendering it. The swaraprastara was short and sweet. Next was kana kana rucirA which I haven't heard rendered in a concert excluding Pancharatna Krithi Aradhanas and Trimurthi Day Aradhanas that I have attended and participated in as a child. Though they followed the traditional way of rendering, the sisters played with such sensitivity and reverence towards Thyagaraja. The percussionists greatly complemented the sisters. The highlight was the swara-sahitya portion where Sornalatha sang the sahitya alongside her elder sister.

Her breath control and switching of the octaves was good. She even explained the third sahitya line during the rendition.



Next, Sornalatha played an endearing Bhairavi alapana. She highlighted the key phrases in the rAgam and finished with a madhya sthAyi RNS which indicated lalitE Srl pravRddhE. The sisters made sure the memory of Lalgudi was evoked throughout the rendition by playing the sangatis he had popularized. The swarams were at the usual line Teliyani and the sisters alternated perfectly with Sankaranarayanan playing for Sornalatha and Chandrasekara Sharma playing for Subhalakshmi. Sornalatha played the last round of swaraprastara and did a complex Abhishek Raghuramesque finish which she slipped during the first time, but she nailed it the second time around with Subhalakshmi joining towards the end.

Next was a soothing heccarikagA rArA which felt like a lullaby towards Sri Rama. The sisters' violins were singing in sync throughout. Following was a rapid nenaruncarA nApaini cAla. Though it would have been better if it was rendered a little slower, the sisters didn't disappoint, and played a few sangatis I hadn't heard before. I was hoping they would play swaraprastara and they did to my delight. Both percussionists were having the time of their lives.

Next Subhalakshmi started Chatusruthi Rishabham and played familiar phrases of kharaharapriyA before highlighting the prati madhyama which made it hEmAvati. Her mandra sthAyi was heartwarming and her bowing was powerful, reminiscent of Lalgudi and Kanyakumari. When she got to the madhya sthAyi, she played the opening notes of Sri kAntimatiM and instantly we knew it would be the main piece. As she was approaching the tAra sthAyi she displayed her strong foundation by alternating between gamaka laden and flat notes. Her tAra sthAyi was terrific and the faster portions leaned towards Kanyakumari style which kept us in awe. She ended the alapana by going back down the mandra sthAyi and finishing softly at madhya shadja.

And Sri kAntimatiM was indeed the main piece, and the sisters were singing through their violins. The sangatis they played were both familiar and fresh. I could tell that long time lovers of Dikshitar's heavenly krithi were loving every moment. I could see a few audience members closing their eyes, soaking in everything. Though it is a short krithi like vallabhA nAyakasya, the sisters did not rush at all. The swaraprastara was simply splendid, especially the tiSra nadai portion which delighted the laya inclined folk. The short portions were also delightful where Subhalakshmi would alternate between the madhya and tAra and Sornalatha, the madhya and mandra. The ending was yet another Abhishek Raghuram inspired one, where they played the third round in tiSram, but this time they didn't slip.

Sankaranarayanan started with the first round in first kALam chatusram. His kuchi mridangam was reminiscent of his guru and he played with great glee. His ending was a korvai popularized by his guru, "thadhi thakadhinatham, dhi thakadhinatham, thakadhinatham, thadhinkinatham, thathadhinkinatham, thakathadhinkinatham"... which he played in 5 speeds. Chandrasekhara Sharma got his turn and showed why he is truly a scion of the legendary Thetakudi Harihara Sharma school. His gumki was reminiscent of his legendary uncle Vikku and the faster portions

even more so because he was playing the different parts of the ghatam the same way. His finishing korvai was a typical Vikku/Subhashchandran one and he ended his turn in tiSram. Perhaps Sankaranarayanan was desiring to play a different nadai, but since the nadai had already transitioned to tiSram, he complied and played a terrific tiSram displaying the different numerous patterns he has mastered. At one point, I thought he was doing a keezh kala miSram and even wanted to go to sankIrnAm, but he kept it at tiSram. His chapu reminded me of another southpaw, Bangalore Arjun Kumar. Chandrasekhara Sharma played a usual tiSram pattern that I have heard numerous times by Subhashchandran and yet showed maturity beyond his age. During the shorter portions, there was a switch to khandam and from there the two percussionists joined forces, playing farans, mohara and korvai in that nadai. What was unique about the mohara was that it did not end in a thalanguthom, but in variations of thakadhinna. After the thani, the quad finished the krithi in style.

After the applause, Sornalatha explained the uniqueness of Sri kAntimatiM. Next, they would render a krithi on Kanchi Maha Periyava in madhuvanti and miSra cApu. This time Subhalakshmi took the vocalist role and sang a melodious alapana in a Hindustani touch with her younger sister following along. Her singing in D# (D on the piano) sounded so sublime that she would just overtake today's Indian classical male singers singing at the same shruti. There was no strain whatsoever. The Pallavi line Saranam Saranam candraSEkhara was divine and the switch from Sanskrit to Tamil sahitya was smooth. Here I must point out the dynamic modulation, which is lacking in many of today's performers, but was greatly emphasized by Dr. Balamuralikrishna throughout his life; both sisters knew how and when to do crescendo and decrescendo without overdoing each whether they were singing or playing. This demonstrates that they are adept in all forms of music as it runs in their blood. In the middle of the krithi, Subhalakshmi explained how the raga mudra has been placed in the charanam line. At the end, she announced that it was Sornalatha's own composition which prompted huge applause.

Then they played Lalgudi's mAnD thillAna which was a request by their disciple Shishir who was on tambura. And they did justice to it, making us feel the maestro's presence in the auditorium. Then Subhalakshmi sang the anupallavi line of nambik-keTTavar which gave us a nice jolt and continued with the rest of the krithi. They immediately segued into the immortal nI nAma rUpamulaku (Subhalakshmi singing and Sornalatha playing) while Sornalatha finished with Surati ending on tAra shadja and Subhalakshmi ending with madhya shadja. Sankaranarayanan and Chandrasekhara Sharma provided a fireworks finale.

Kudos to Sruti for providing this bravura performance by the Sisters, Sankaranarayanan and Chandrasekhara Sharma which gave the rasikAs their money's worth.

Jayram Sataluri is a rasika and an ardent supporter of SRUTI.

Instruments of Carnatic Music

Bhavya Guru

Carnatic music is a world of beautiful melodies and rhythmic beats. While vocals may seem to be at the forefront of Carnatic music, the various instruments involved in symphonies add immense value. Some of the many instruments include the veena, mridangam, violin, ghatam, and flute.

The veena, a traditional string instrument, is intertwined with Carnatic music. Its history dates back thousands of years, and its contribution to the genre is invaluable. In the context of Carnatic singing, the veena often takes on the role of the lead instrument, acting as a melodic guide for the vocal performer. The veena's deep, resonant tones complement the singing. It provides a framework for the singer to follow and embellish. In larger symphonic Carnatic performances, the veena's melodies create an interplay with the vocalists, improving the overall musical experience. Talented musicians Dr. S. Balachander, Emani Shankara Shastry, and Jayanthi Kumaresh are famous veena artists.

The mridangam, a prominent percussion instrument, is the heartbeat of Carnatic music. Its role in Carnatic singing and symphonies is pivotal. In vocal performances, the mridangam sets the tempo and provides a solid rhythmic

foundation for the singer. It accentuates the lyrics and aids the vocalist in maintaining the intricate talams. It engages in lively conversations with the other instruments, creating dynamic and compelling rhythmic patterns that elevate the entire performance. During Carnatic concerts, mridangam players energize the environment with their fast-paced and exciting rhythms in a solo or as an accompaniment.

The violin's introduction to Carnatic music in the 18th century marked a significant evolution in the genre. The violin plays a vital role as an accompaniment in vocal performances, enriching the melodic landscape. It has the unique ability to imitate the human voice, making it an ideal partner to the singer. The violinist responds to the vocalist's phrases, echoing them and adding artistic flourishes. The violin acts as the bridge between melody and rhythm. It connects the vocal and percussion sections, creating a seamless fusion. The violin's emotive expressions add depth and feeling to the overall symphony. The introduction of the violin to Carnatic music in the 18th century marked a significant evolution in the genre. Sri Balaswami Dikshitar, the brother of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar, was one of the most influential Carnatic violinists due to his large contributions to Carnatic music in the early nineteenth century.

The ghatam, another percussion instrument, adds an earthy and rhythmic quality to Carnatic music. In vocal performances, it complements the mridangam by providing a unique textural contrast; in Sanskrit, ghatam means 'pot', and it is made of clay, mud, and some metals. Its resonant and percussive sounds punctuate the singing. In larger ensembles, the ghatam brings a rustic energy to the symphony. As its popularity increases, the ghatam has become a common instrument in solo Carnatic performances as well, showcasing the intricate rhythms that drive the performance forward.

The flute, or venu, is a wind instrument that conveys serenity in Carnatic music. Similar to the violin, the flute acts as a responsive instrument to the vocal performer, mirroring and complementing the melodic lines. The flute drapes a layer of tranquility with its soft notes, sharing the beautiful and divine emotions encompassed in a Carnatic music concert. Unlike the Western flute, the Carnatic flute is made of bamboo. It has been mentioned in ancient shastras and associated with Lord Krishna. However, it was only in the late 1800s when it was seen on the stage. With his unique and advanced techniques, Sri Sarabha Sastri initiated this change, transforming the venu from a simple, melodious folk instrument to a major concert instrument.

In the world of Carnatic music, the instruments play a central role, bringing together soothing melodies that provide relaxation and enjoyment. These instruments, with their individual charm and history, invite the audience to unwind and enjoy the timeless and calming journey of the senses at each and every performance.

Bhavya Guru is a rising junior and is a member of Sruti Youth Group. She has been learning Carnatic vocal from Lata Suresh for 8 years..

telisi rAma cintanatO.... tyAgarAja's brilliant use of polysemy^[1]

Prabhakar Chitrapu

Background^[2]

It was a moonlit night, in fact it was full moon - *pUrNima*.

As it was his habit, he walked down the *tirumanjanam viidhi* where he lived, towards the *kAvEri* river - not more than a few hundred yards away. Under a huge caring tree, he sat and watched the sparkling waves, shining playfully in the soft rays of the full moon.

His mind began to wander, as gently as the *kAvEri* waters. How different people can be! That too, at the core of their personalities. Two people see the same thing and completely different thoughts flash in their minds.

A stately woman passes by. One sees one's favorite Goddess in her. The other is untouched.

One is reading an ancient book of literature - and is fascinated by the language and the poetic intricacies. The other is touched in the heart and the eyes well up in an inexplicable emotion.

One is practising music and is carried away by the musical structures & complexities and their ornamentations - spanning expansive scales and pouring out torrents of *svara*-s and *gamaka*-s. The other gets into a meditative state and harmoniously blended music emanates, as if flowing through from a higher source and not concocted by one's calculating mind. How often had he not mentioned this to his students - the importance of *bhakti* (devotion) and *bhAva* (feeling) and decried the mere craftsmanship of music! How many songs did he not already compose on this idea!

Even the revered *Adi Sankara* said that without *bhakti* (devotion), knowledge alone is of no help in the long run. Oh fool, said he, all the technical knowledge will not protect you, even as you enter the terminal phase of your life and pass. So, pray to the God now, *bhaja gOvindam.....samprAptE sannihitE kAlE, nahi nahi rakshati dukRuNkaraNE!*

His mind became quiet - all thoughts seemed to subside. Only undisturbed consciousness prevailed.

He was not aware how much earthly time had passed, but when thoughts came back, it was dark on the waters and the sands, with clouds keeping the moon to themselves. With sharp chills teasing his body, he picked himself up and started to walk back.

By the time he reached home, a song took shape in his mind. The message would be the same - to see a thing in life, to do a thing in life and not be distracted by a secondary aspect of them. By focusing on the primary aspect, one can be liberated. Free. Free from bonds created by one's actions, speech and thoughts. Get distracted by the secondaries and one is forever stuck in status-quo.

In this song, he wanted to play on words. He would choose words, with pairs of widely different meanings. And show that with one interpretation, one can get liberated. With the other, one will get ensnared in the ever-tightening, temporarily-pleasing bonds of life and will not be able to free oneself of the restless mind and its distorted analyses.

Three words came to his mind *rAma*, *arka* and *aja*. They meant, respectively, *rAma*, the God-in-human-form and also a woman; the Sun and a commonplace poisonous plant; and the consort of the Goddess of learning and a simple goat!

One is dedicated to and meditates incessantly on the word, *rAma* - name of the one brahman, who had taken the form of a human and is thus released from the bonds of daily life (*samsAram*) and enjoys everlasting peace. The other is also preoccupied by the same word, *rAma*, now thinking of a seductive woman. Won't such a person forever suffer from the stabs of lust (*kAmAdula pOru*)?

[1] Words with multiple meanings [2] An imagined account of what may have motivated tyAgarAja to compose this song!

Likewise, the word *arka* refers to the darkness shattering source of all life, the sun (*bhAskara*). It also means a commonplace plant. So is one rid of the darkness of distorted discussions (*kutarka*) by meditating on the first meaning, while jumping thoughts to the other by an unfocused mind can never get rid of its monkey fickleness (*markaTa buddhi*).

aja is the consort of the Goddess of learning, *sarasvati*, but can also mean a simple goat. So can a meditation on the first meaning lead to the fulfillment of desires and success (*vijayam*), but if the meditation is constantly disturbed by the other, the desires (*nija kOrika*) will never be appeased.

Oh mind, know this subtle and slippery difference between the two vastly different things that look alike on the surface and dwell always on the name of *Srii rAma*. Learn to silence the chattering mind even for a minute and get to know the true nature of Him.

He wondered what *rAga* to set this song to. He looked up into the sky. The clouds had cleared and the full moon shone again. *pUrna candra*. Yes, why not *pUrNa candrika*?

The kriti (composition)

pallavi:

telisi rAma cintanatO nAmamu
sEyavE O manasA

anupallavi:

talapulanni nilipi nimishamaina
tAraka rUpuni nija tatvamulanu (telisi)

caraNam 1:

rAmAyana capalAkshula pEru
kAmAdula pOru vAru vlru
rAmAyana brahmamunaku pEru
A mAnava jananArtulu tlrU (telisi)

caraNam 2:

arkamanucu jilleDu taru pEru
markaTa buddhuleTTu tlrU
arkuDanucu bhAskaruniki pEru
kutarkamanE andhakAramu tlrU (telisi)

caraNam 3:

ajamanucu mEshamunaku pEru
nija kOrikalElAgIDeRu
ajuDani vAgiiSvaruniki pEru
vijayamu kalgunu tyAgarAja nutuni (telisi)

sAhitya (lyrics) appreciation:

This *kriti* has the usual structure: *pallavi*, *anupallavi*, and a number of *caraNam*-s (in this case, 3). It may be interesting to note that although most of *tyAgarAja*'s *kriti*-s have but 1 *caraNam*, 3 *caraNam*-s is not uncommon at all. In fact, one of his compositions (*Srii rAma rAmASritulamu* in *rAga sAvEri*) has as many as 15 *caraNam*-s!

tyAgarAja employs his famous technique of “wrap-around” in this *kriti*. For example, the meaning of *anupallavi* is incomplete, unless it is wrapped-around to the *pallavi* as: *talapulanni nilipi, nimishamaina, tAraka rUpuni nija tatvamulanu telisi....* Similarly, the last phrase in the last *caraNam* has to be wrapped-around to make sense, as: *tyAgarAja nutuni telisi...*

In contrast, the first and second *caraNam*-s stand by themselves and do not need the wrap-around for the completion of the meaning.

Another popular poetic aspect of 4-line *caraNam*-s is the repetition of the second syllable of each line. In the first *caraNam*, notice the initial words of the 4 lines: *rAma-kAma-rAma-AmA(nava)*.

Similarly, in the second *caraNam*: *arka-marka-arku(Du)-tarka* and in the last *caraNam*: *aja-nija-aja-vija(ya)...*

Similarly, the last syllable in each of the 4 lines is also repeating:

First *caraNam*: *pEru-viiru-pEru-tiiru*

Second *caraNam*: *pEru-tiiru-pEru-tiiru*

Last *caraNam*: *pEru-iiDEru-pEru*.

A detailed meaning (including word-by-word) can be found online here: <https://thyagaraja-vaibhavam.blogspot.com/2008/06/thyagaraja-kriti-thelisi-rama.html>

***sangiita* (music) appreciation:**

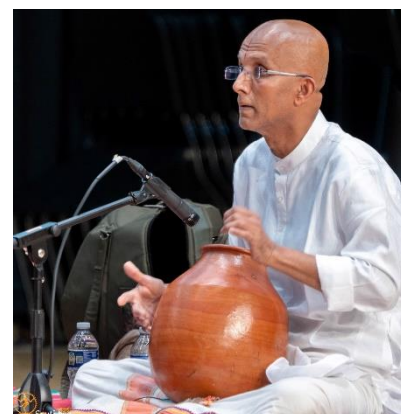
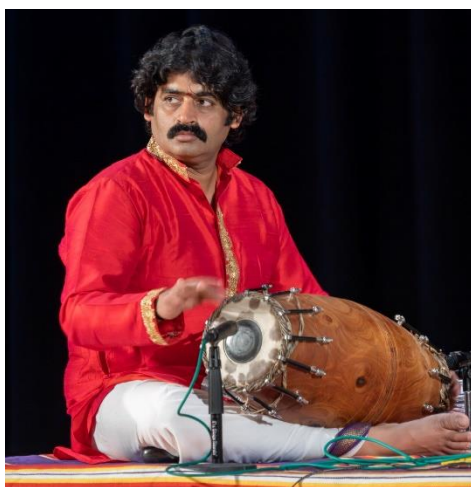
This *kriti* is quite popular and is rendered by many artists. In particular, I would like to refer to the following one by Balamuralikrishna, because he has sung all the 3 *caraNam*-s here.

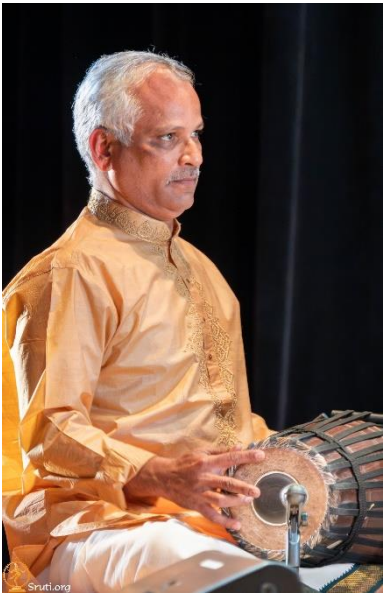
https://youtu.be/ajXBY_-xaXo?si=XvrfCi6YEtGoMkAr

A detailed appreciation of *tyAgarAja*’s music of this *kriti* is being planned as second part of this article. I am collaborating with some of my Carnatic music *rasika*-s (connoisseurs) in this effort and would welcome you to also join, if you like.

Prabhakar Chitrapu is a lover of music, language and philosophy. He often contributes to SRUTI publications and has served the organization in various capacities. He maintains a website www.Thyagaraja.org.

2023 Musical Moments















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Ramaa and Rungan Nathan
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Shama Tinaikar
Shankar Ramasami
Shashikala Tanjore
Shobhita Kramadhati and Karthik Pisupati
Shruthi/Jay/Karun Jayaram
Sindhu Budhavarapu
Sivam Rangavajjula
Sivaraman Yegyaraman
Soumya Rajesh
Sri Vidhya Ramkumar
Sridhar Iyer
Srinivas Chaganti
Srinivasan & Lakshmi Raghavan
Sriram Satagopan
Srividya Dhulipala & Venkata Tumuluri
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Subha & Nari Narayanan
Subrahmanyam Rajagopal
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Sureshbabu Ponnaperumal
Swaminathan Ganesh
Thambipillai Sureshkumar

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Maha and Ashok Raman
Malini Sheshadri and Saroj Ramdas
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Mira & Srikant Raghavachari
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Usha Raghuraman
Usha& Dev Iyer
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Vasantha Nagarajan
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2024 Sruti Spring Lineup

Sponsorships
(Season Tickets)
at www.sruti.org
(Artists and dates
subject to change)

Thyagaraja
Aradhana
Mar 30



J A Jayanth
Mar 30



Bharat Sundar
Apr 6



K S Vishnudev
Apr 27

Lalgudi GJR Krishnan &
Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi
May 4

NJ Nandini
May 18



Dance program
In June
Artist TBD

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