

SRUTI RANJANI

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Winter Issue

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From the editors:

It is with considerable pleasure that we bring you this, our third and last issue of 1992. A delightful mix of vocal and instrumental concerts, North and South Indian dance dramas and solo dance performances made this a memorable year. The Annual Report by our President sums up our activities over the past year.

Since our last issue in July, 1992, SRUTI organized three concerts- an evocative dance performance by Chitra Visweswaran, a stupendous flute concert by the 14-year old child prodigy Shashank, and a captivating vocal concert by Sudha Raghunathan. Reviews of these by various members of the audience are presented in this issue. We are sure our readers will enjoy them, especially those of you who could not make it to the programs.

Apart from these, we have an article on the Travancore king-composer Swati Tirunal and an article on how the choice of language was influenced by the composer's moods. Sruti Ranjani staff continues its regular feature on ragas by discussing Gowrimanohari. From this issue, we are starting a new feature titled "Tunes, Notes and Tidbits", which lists music activities in the tri-state area not directly organized by SRUTI.

As mentioned in our previous issue, the Library Committee is maintaining a list of SRUTI concert tapes which are available for purchase by interested patrons. The latest list with an order form is printed at the back of this issue. We urge you to update your personal collection with our quality recordings of your favourite artists.

At this point, while we wait for the new year to bring us its riches, let us take a moment to reflect on the role of SRUTI in the cultural landscape of the Delaware valley. It is our pleasureable duty to bring you the best Indian dance and music programs. To do this, we need your continued support for SRUTI activities. Please fill up our concert halls next year. See you at the Thyagaraja Aradhana celebrations on February 27, 1993. Our next issue is the *Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir* to be brought out on that day. We invite you to participate actively in Sruti Ranjani by sending us articles and/or letters.

Editors: Lakshmi Govindan Kannan Ranganathan
G. Sridhar Srinidhi Sampath Dinakar Subramanian

To the editors:

Better reviews pleaseeeeeease.....

Dear Editor,

On receiving the recent "Sruti Ranjani", I enthusiastically flipped the pages to find the review on "Krishnam Vande Jagat Gurum". Having attended the concert, I was anxious to read the critical opinion of one of your Sruti experts - well-versed with the technical, theoretical, critical aspects of the performance. To my utter disappointment, the scintillating concert received a rather cursory and weak review. The general nature of the article added nothing to enlighten me about the concert in specific, or dance, in general.

I think a poorly-written article or review does injustice to not only the audience/readers, but more importantly, to the artists. A performance of such a grand scale and innovativeness should have been reviewed in detail by one of your other reviewers. Or, you should present articles of critical and general natures separately. The article in question was the only sloppy feature of an otherwise eclectic issue !

Sincerely,
Renuka Adiraju
Bryn Mawr, Pa.

WHO CARES ...

Dear editor,

I would like to respond to two letters of Dr. Ari Sitaramayya which appeared in the SR (V2.2) one of which itself referred to my article in SR (V2.1). I agree with Dr. Sitaramayya that it is important that vocalists make strong efforts to properly pronounce the words while singing compositions. Indeed, that was my intent also when I wrote WHO CARES, except that I tried to infuse a bit of sarcasm into my words, which may have been lost. While agreeing with the spirit of Dr. Sitaramayya's contention, I also believe that a strong case can be made that pure music transcends mere words. I will support my thesis with discussion from 3 genres of classical music.

- 1) Firstly, let us stay with the medium of S. Indian music. Many instrumentalists including N. Ramani (flute) and M. S. Gopalakrishnan (violin) play in the 'gayaki' style. However, it is clear that when they play Thyagaraja kritis, we do not hear the words, however familiar the piece. This does not reduce by a whit our enjoyment of their music.
- 2) Let us now listen, with our sisters and brothers, from the North of the Vindhyas, to N. Indian music. N. Indian vocalists do use words in the form of bandish. But the music is almost totally raga based and the words are at best peripheral.
- 3) Finally, much of the greatest music ever composed anywhere do not have a single word. I am referring to the orchestral works of Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Mendelsohn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky et al. Can anyone think of more subliminal music than the concerti of Bach and Vivaldi, the last three symphonies of Mozart, the Symphony #5 of Beethoven, the New World Symphony of Dvorak, the violin concerti of Brahms and Mendelssohn and scores of other works of Western classical music **. Even in the annals of applied music, Tchaikovsky's ballets (e.g. Swan Lake) can evoke myriads of emotions and feelings.

In the final analysis, I feel that abstract music exists as a Supreme art form, all by itself. It is the genius of S. Indian composers, especially the Trinity and more particularly Thyagaraja, who were able to blend and incorporate great musical ideas in well structured compositions. It behooves well for the socialists to maintain the coordination by proper pronunciation, thereby enhancing the enjoyment of the music as a whole.

Yours Sincerely,
Rasikan

** This is pure music par excellence!

Apology...

Dear fellow-members of SRUTI,

I am writing this to formally apologize to you and other concert attendees, on behalf of the CMANA which sponsored the concert tour of Mrs. Sudha Raghunathan and party and was responsible for bringing the artistes to the concert hall on time on December 5, 1992, but did do so causing an extensive delay in the start of Mrs. Sudha's concert. A number of factors unfortunately

contributed to this delay and none of them was due to any one of the SRUTI organizers. We did offer to announce this on the stage before the start of the concert, but Dr. M. M. Subramaniam, President of SRUTI, was very gracious enough and did not think that it was necessary or proper. We thank him, the committee members of SRUTI and you for your understanding and will try our best not to repeat this if within our power.

Thank You

Uma Roy
President of CMANA
& a life-member of SRUTI

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Annual Report - 1992

M.M.Subramaniam

Dear SRUTI Colleague,

Greetings. Your managing committee is happy to present this Annual Report along with the financial statement, for the year 1992. Our General Body usually meets only once in two years. However, we felt that we should communicate to you our activities more often via our Newsletters and at least once a year present the highlights of the year's activities.

1992 has been, by far, SRUTI's most active year. Including the Thyagaraja Aradhana, we arranged a total of 8 programs in about 9 months.

Thyagaraja Aradhana, arranged on 7th March at the Hindu Temple, Berlin, NJ, attracted as usual, a large crowd and record participation. A feature of this year was Ramaa Ramesh's abhinayam in the Bharathanatyam style for two of Thyagaraja's kritis. Continuing our tradition of recognizing an accomplished artiste resident in the neighbouring area, we invited Indu Vasudevan to give a concert. She was accompanied by Vijaya Voleti on the violin and Venkatesh on the mridangam.

The season started off with the concert on 2 May, at the Poquessing H.S., by Madurai T.N. Seshagopalan accompanied by G. Chandramouli on the violin and N. Narayanan on the mridangam. We use the word season advisedly. For the first time, we instituted the system of Season Pass entitling the purchaser a discount off the regular member's admission. Effectively, a person who bought the Pass and attended all the programs got to attend the seventh concert 'Free'.

Since all the programs are reviewed in our magazine Sruti Ranjani, we will not dwell at length on them. However, here's a brief run down.

On 17 May, N. Ramani with Kanyakumari on the violin and Guruvayur Dorai on the mridangam gave a delightful flute concert at the Stein auditorium, Drexel University. This is the second time Ramani, as also Kanyakumari, have performed for SRUTI. Ramani had visited us in '89 and Kanyakumari (with MLV) in '86. A good crowd thoroughly enjoyed the concert.

One of the most beautiful programs ever presented by SRUTI was on 21 June, when the International Dance Academy presented 'Krishnam Vande Jagatgurum', a dance drama. A group of young and budding artistes gave a scintillating performance. This program was arranged at the Plymouth-Whitemarsh H.S. (P-W.H.S.) auditorium. P-W.H.S. is really a very good facility. It is easily accessible from freeways, has airconditioning in summer, and the availability of very good lighting considerably enhances the enjoyment of dance programs.

SRUTI has always been open in presenting programs native to different parts of India. In keeping with that philosophy, we presented the famous Odissi dancer Sanjukta Panigrahi on 17 July. Sanjukta and her troupe presented traditional Odissi items followed by Gita Govindam based on the lyrics of Jayadeva's Ashtapadis.

The above program was also arranged at P-W.H.S. as was the Bharatanatyam program by Chitra Visweswaran on 10 October. Chitra is one of the best known Bharatanatyam artistes today and she proved why by her superb performance that day.

It may sound trite, but it seems that quite a few prodigies are turning up on the S.Indian music scene. A few years ago, we had Mandolin Srinivas closely followed by Gottuvadyam N. Ravikiran. We now have Shashank (14 years old) blazing new trails on the flute. It was exciting to watch and hear this prodigy produce absolutely mature music for nearly 3 hours on 31 October. M.A. Sundaresan and Mannargudi Easwaran were the co-artistes.

The final concert of the year on 5 December, was provided by Sudha Raghunathan. Sudha, the standard bearer of the MLV school of music provided many glimpses of her mentor even as she develops her own style.

Our subcommittees have also been busy during the year. The Resources Committee consisting of Anand Kuchibhotla (Chair), N.V. Raman, Meena Seth, Sudhakara Rao, and P. Swaminathan has taken steps to get recognition for SRUTI as a non-profit organization by the IRS. The Library Committee consisting of Lakshmi Govindan (Chair), Kannan Ranganathan, Srinidhi Sampath, G. Sridhar, and Dinakar Subramanian produced 3 issues of Sruti Ranjani including the present one. They are also responsible for maintaining the tape library, copying and mailing cassettes of concerts to those who request them. They are in the process of

developing albums of photos taken during SRUTI programs.

We are very happy to have presented many superb programs for your enjoyment. The attendance for most programs has been good, reflecting the good position SRUTI occupies in the community. However, for a few programs, noticeably for the Chitra Visweswaran and Shashank performances, the attendance fell far below our expectations. That, combined with the fairly high fees commanded by the artistes these days has put a dent in our earnings. We tried a two tier approach to admission pricing for the Sanjukta Panigrahi program, which ended in a total failure. We need to step up and improve our financial position. There are a number of capital purchases badly needed, for instance a tape-duplicating machine, and a computer for use especially by the Library Committee. We are hopeful that once we get status as a non-profit organization, we can go in for some fund-raising activities.

Meanwhile, we would very much appreciate getting feedback from you. Please take the time to write to us with your candid comments. Please come up with concrete suggestions for improvement and methods of implementing them. You may use the forum of Sruti Ranjani to give your comments, so that they may be shared by all the readers. At the very least, call us and give us an earful. We would very much like to hear from you.

Finally, while we are just finishing an eventful year, we have begun planning our activities for 1993! The Thyagaraja Aradhana is scheduled for 27 February, 1993. Among the prospective programs are a dance drama by Ramya Harishankar and troupe, a major dance production by the famous Dhananjayans, Mandolin Srinivas, vocal concert by K. V. Narayanaswamy and a vocal concert by one of the most promising young artiste of the day, Vijay Siva, a disciple of D.K. Jayaraman.

The Managing Committee wishes you and your dear and loved ones the best during the Holidays and the very best and prosperous New Year.

SRUTI
The India Music and Dance Society

Financial report - 1992

Account transfer from 1991	<u>\$5634.65</u>
Revenue	
- Membership dues	\$1650.00
- Interest income	\$102.16
- Gross receipts from admissions and sale of tapes	\$16382.30
Total revenue	<u>\$18134.46</u>
Expenses	
- Fund raising expenses	\$5727.46
- Contributions	\$10374.08
- Finance and service charges	\$387.20*
- Occupancy	\$2561.24**
Total expenses	<u>\$19049.98</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses for 1992	<u>\$-915.52</u>
Balance end of 1992	<u>\$4719.13</u>

Notes :

* Includes IRS nonprofit application fee : \$375.00

** Includes insurance premium : \$427.00

Membership status :

Life members	129
Regular members	52
Student members	9

Dated December 20, 1992

Sudhakar Rao
Treasurer

Swathi Thirunal and his Music

V. Mahadevan

I had the good fortune to listen, even from my boyhood, to a good number of Maharaja Swati Thirunal's compositions rendered by my cousin Padmanabha Iyer who was a Bhagavathar graduated from the Swati Thirunal Academy of Music in Trivandrum under the illustrious principal Semmangudi Sreenivasa Bhagavathar. I enjoyed going to many of his Kacheries. I am not a musician. In spite of this, I have ventured to write this article on Swati Thirunal hoping others may be tempted to delve into Swati Thirunal's kritis in more detail than I can.

On April 16, 1813, a prince named Sree Rama Varma Kulasekhara Perumal was born to the royal family of Travancore. According to the practice of naming a prince after the star under which he is born, he was called Swati Thirunal, Swati being the star at the time of his birth. As a boy, he mastered 18 languages, both Indian and foreign, including Sanskrit, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Persian, English etc. under various tutors. For instance, Telugu was taught by one Subramania Bhagavathar, Persian by Syed Nizam Moidu and Marathi by Sesha Panditar Subba Rao of Tanjore. Subba Rao later became Dewan of the state and was largely responsible for making Swati Thirunal what the world knows him to be. He taught the Maharaja political science, English, Marathi and more important than all these, Carnatic music as current in Tanjore, the cultural center of Tamilnad.

The musical education of Swati Thirunal is worthy of special attention. The early lessons were given by Karamanai Subrahmanya Bhagavathar (a section of Trivandrum where this writer hails from) followed by musicians of repute brought from Tanjore. Among these were Vadivel and his brothers, Kannayya Bhagavathar, a disciple of Thyagaraja and Meruswami, alias Anandapadmanabha Goswami, a Marathi saint singer from Tanjore.

In April 1829, at age 16, the Maharaja took direct charge of the administration of the state from the Regent. Having mastered and having seen the rise of British power, he started an English school in Trivandrum in 1834 which became Maharaja's College later and ultimately University of Kerala. He established hospitals, built irrigation canals, dams, bridges, established printing presses and an oriental manuscripts library. Above all, he gave his subjects good Government.

Amidst his preoccupations as a ruler, he found time to compose songs and to listen to good music. He believed that the aim of poetry and music was to sing the glories of God. He adopted Padmanabha, the deity of his temple, and his synonyms as his *mudra*. His writings, both literary and musical are praises of His glory. He composed nearly 500 kritis. In the kirtana "Sreepadmanabha Kalayitum Tvam" (Madhyamavathi), he shows how his mind is attracted towards the Lord. In the kirtana, "Pahi Sada Padmanabha" (Mukhari), he prays that all his senses be directed towards the Lord. He insisted that the songs by Nadaswaram Vidwans in his temple must be those in praise of the deity there. He, therefore, composed songs to suit the occasions. For instance, whenever the deity is taken out in procession, the song to be played first is "Pankajalochana" in Kalyani. During the utsavas conducted twice a year, the songs in the Utsavaprabhanda, a musical narrative written by the Maharaja containing ten songs and a number of verses are used. For the night processions, it is the varnas and padas that are chosen. During minor festivals, songs in ragas like Saveri, Dhanyasi, Punthagavali are used. The very first song to be used to awaken the deity from sleep is in Devagandhara raga "Jaya Jaya Ramaramana" which describes the dawn and the ten avatars. His ragas range from popular ones like Kalyani and Thodi to apurva and complex ragas like Sudhabhairavi, Lalithapanchamam, Kurinchi and so on. He has also composed in Hindusthani ragas like Darbari Kanada, Dvijavanthi, Sindhubhairavi etc. He was a multilingual composer in many languages like Sanskrit, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Hindusthani.

What are some of the factors that influenced him in his musical activity? We must remember that the period of the rise in Carnatic music was one of a revival of the Bhakthi movement or cult in South India. The three great saints Sadasiva Brahmendra, Bodhendra Saraswati and Ayyaval had preached the utterance of God as the sure means of attaining Mukthi. The music composers were influenced by this and the new form of composition, namely kriti, a poetic and devotional medium came into vogue and Thyagaraja, Dikshitar and others adopted it as the vehicle of their musical expression. Swati Thirunal was also influenced by this. He also inherited the powers of musical composition of his nephew Aswati Thirunal and other relatives. He was also influenced by the compositions of Margadarshi Sessa Iyengar, the 17th century composer and also the members of his musical court, Vadivel, Kannayya Bhagavathar and Govinda Marar. Vadivel was a disciple of Dikshitar and well-versed in western music and violin. It was he

who introduced violin, a western instrument, in South Indian music. Kannayya Bhagavathar was a disciple of Saint Thyagaraja and a gifted vocalist. Govinda Marar was a great musical genius whose skill so wonderstruck Thyagaraja that the Saint composed "Endaro Mahanubhavulu". Then there was the great Meruswami. Although he was associated with such geniuses, Swati Thirunal always retained his individuality.

During the latter part of his life, because of the interference of the British in his affairs of the state and other factors, which brought in his mental distress, he practically renounced the world and began writing stotras on the Divine, like Vairagyakirtanas and melodious songs "Palaya Sri Padmanabha" etc.

In 1846, at age 33, he passed away. During this brief span of life, he established his name as a great ruler, a man of letters and a great composer. While Thyagaraja, Sastri and Dikshitar had a long and leisurely life devoted to music alone, Maharaja Swati Thirunal devoted his leisure time to music. A major part of his time was spent in administering a state with many problems. His musical contributions are an asset to posterity and they are preserved with great reverence, for years to come.

V. Mahadevan. is the president of Deva Biotech Inc., Hatboro, PA.
He is a strong SRUTI supporter.

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"Krishnam Vande Jagatgurum" ----- IDA

Padmashri N. Ramani

SRUTI - 1992

Madurai T. N. Seshagopalan

Sanjuktha Panigrahi

Sudha Raghunathan

Chitra Visweswaran

Master Shashank

Thyagaraja Aradhana

GowriManohari Ragam

SRUTI Staff

GowriManohari is 23rd in the scheme of melakarta ragams of South Indian music. The scale consists of: Shadjam, Chatusruti Rishabam, Sadharana Gandharam, Suddha Madhyamam, Panchamam, Chatusruti Dhaivatam, and Kakali Nishadam.

GowriManohari is a very melodious ragam. However, it is not heard that frequently in concerts. One possible reason maybe that its scale differs only in the Nishadam from the immensely popular Karaharapriya, and only in the Dhaivatham from Keeravani, another popular ragam (see Sruti Ranjani V.2 No.2, July '92). A second reason may be that there are not many kritis in this ragam. Thyagaraja's *Gurulekha yetu vanti* (which Master Shashank played at length in the SRUTI concert of October 31), is just about the only popular kriti in GowriManohari.

Another name for the 23rd melakarta is GowriVelavali. Dikshithar used this nomenclature in his kriti in this ragam - *Kaumari Gowri Velavali*. Dikshithar invariably brought in the name of the ragam in the text of his kritis, especially in the first kriti of his in a given ragam. Balamuralikrishna has rendered this kriti in his characteristic style of singing Dikshithar's kritis with more flat notes than is common. Papanasam Sivan also has a Tamil composition - *Gowri Manohara Karunakara*..

Tamil film music fans can identify this ragam through the oldie *Paattum naaney, Bhavamum naaney* in the Tamil movie "Thiruvilayadal" and *Gowrimanohariyai Kanden* in a more recent Tamil film.

Dharmavathi (Damavathi in the Dikshithar school) is the Prati Madhyama counterpart of GowriManohari.

A Prodigy Sparkles Review of flute concert by Shashank

Rasikan

Lata and Ramu are keen enthusiasts of Carnatic music. Lata talks excitedly of a flute concert, arranged by SRUTI, that she had attended. Ramu, having been out of town, could not attend the concert. Let us overhear their conversation.

- Ramu : Hi Lata. What are you excited about ?
Lata : Hi Ramu. Too bad you were not here last Saturday. What a great flute concert. Wow !
Ramu : Tell me all about it. What did he - the flutist was a he, right? What did he play ?
Lata : Yes. He started off with that delightful Kambodhi Ata tala varnam, *Sarasija*. And you know what ? He did something in the varnam that I haven't heard in years.
Ramu : What is it ?
Lata : He played tisram in 2 kalams and he played them effortlessly. What control ! Wow!
Ramu : After the varnam ...
Lata : He played a crisp *Mahaganapathim* in Nattai. This was followed by a rather elaborate Malayamarutham and the Thyagaraja kriti *Manasa yetulo*. You know what Ramu ? The ease with which he handled the ragam, kriti and swara prastharam, you would think Malayamarutham was a major ragam, rather than a minor ragam that it really is.
Ramu : I am already envious of you. what then ?
Lata : Then followed a lyrical Nalinakanti - *Manavyala kincha* - of Thyagaraja. This gave an opportunity for M.A. Sundaresan - violin accompaniment - to display shades of the virtuosity in that ragam that we associate with his famous uncle M.S.Gopalakrishnan. This piece was followed by a bhava laden rendering of the moving Syama Sastry kriti in Chintamani - *Devi brova samayamidhey*. He even tried a few swarams in that very rare ragam. The major piece was the Thyagaraja kriti in GowriManohari - *Gurulekha*. He rendered the ragam rather elaborately and essayed crisp swara prastharams in the khanda chapu talam of the kriti.
Ramu : He seems to have a good mix of ragams and talams.
Lata : He sure did. After a brief kriti in Balahamsa, he took up Saveri for ragam, tanam and pallavi. The pallavi was in misra chapu talam.

Ramu : He had major pieces in both kinds of chapu: khanda and misra. What about the post pallavi period ?

Lata : The post pallavi segment was rather short but sweet. the ever popular Purandara dasa padam, *Jagadho dharana* in Karnataka Kapi and the Khamas jhaval, *Marubari*. All the pieces he played that day will ring in my ears for years.

Ramu : I am really sorry that I had to miss N. Ramani's concert.

Lata : Who is talking of Ramani ?

Ramu : Surely, Lata, the kind of music that you just described, with intelligent mixture of ragams and talams can only be associated with some veteran like Ramani.

Lata : No Ramu. It was by a 14 year old boy.

Ramu : You've got to be kidding. A 14 year old boy, touring this country and giving full length concerts complete with ragam, thanam, pallavi ! Come on Lata ...

Lata : Ramu, I am serious. Yes. Master Shashank turned 14 just a few weeks back. It was quite a sight to see this lad provide some of the greatest thrills not only to me but to all others who attended this concert on October 31. I tell you, it was an experience of a lifetime to watch this prodigy produce cascades of music with great ease. You know what ? You are quite right. If you closed your eyes and just listened to the flute music, you would assert that a seasoned artist of many years was playing. Shashank is a true prodigy. He could identify the 72 melakartas even as a 3 year old. His father told me that Shashank had no training whatsoever in flute playing. All the fingering and the breath control techniques to produce melodious music, he learnt by himself. He had some vocal training from R.K.Srikantan, Palakkad K.V.Narayanaswamy and a few others. Indeed the Chintamani piece had touches of KVN. However, Shashank has built himself a repertoire of more than 200 kritis, by listening to stalwarts and the cassettes of their concerts. I have no doubt that Shashank is going to be one of the brightest stars in the years to come.

Ramu : I bet. Who and how were the accompanying artists ?

Lata : Oh, you know what ? In my enthusiasm over Shashank, I forgot to mention the co-artists. I felt that they were important components for the total enjoyment of the concert. M.A.Sundaresan accompanied on the violin. He is the son of the violinist M.S.Anantharaman, and hence the nephew of the great MSG. He played competently displaying the solid Parur tradition of bowing and MSG schooling.

Mannargudi Easwaran provided mridangam accompaniment. Easwaran is a veteran and gave excellent support. On occasion, he even helped Shashank by keeping talam on the left hand and playing the mridangam with the right. What struck me was the obvious enjoyment they themselves got out of Shashank's music. All in all, a very memorable evening at the SRUTI concert. Of course, we certainly have come to expect the best from every SRUTI program and never get disappointed.

Ramu : Amen !

Lata, Ramu and the whole conversation are of course pure fiction; but the concert described was a true event. Shashank's flute concert on Saturday, 31 October was easily one of the best programs arranged by SRUTI. Even at this tender age, Shashank produces really mature music. He does not exhibit any nervousness or mannerism and comports himself seriously on stage. All lovers of Indian music will be keenly following the career of this prodigy who sparkled on October 31.

(Eds...The above is a review of what happened on-stage on October 31, 1992 at Stein auditorium. A brief narration of what happened off-stage (after the concert was over) follows. This was written by Pratibha Adipudi for Summer - Fall 1992 issue of Sangeetham and is being printed here with the kind of permission of Sangeetham.)

We, the Adipudi children were thrilled with the masterful concert on Halloween day in Philadelphia by Shashank, which included a stunning RTP in Saveri and a rare kriti in Balahamsa raga, but we were more thrilled when we were allowed to take Shashank out 'trick-or-treating' after the concert! We saw a totally different side of Shashank - agile, playful and a pure fun-loving kid - we loved it. He was energetically getting candy (200 pieces by his last count) and "having the best time of his life". We did too and definitely enjoyed an evening that will remain fresh in our minds for a long time. We also feel lucky to get to know a child prodigy in person; it was an educational experience which was 'fun' as well. I think Shashank will remember his Halloween experience also, since he could be just a kid amongst kids instead of a professional musician.

Thank you Shashank!

Captivating Bharatanaatyam

Kala Menon

Chitra Visweswaran, the vivacious dancer, reputed teacher and talented choreographer, gave a scintillating Bharatanaatyam performance (*arranged by SRUTI...Ed*) on October 10, 1992 at the Plymouth-Whitemarsh High School. Chitra brought to the evening a rare combination of refinement, perfection, creativity, grace, stamina and sprightliness. She prefaced each piece with a brief talk-demonstration. She emphasized that to her, Bharatanaatyam was a refined form of communication with aesthetic tones. It was clear from her flawless and enjoyable Abhinaya (expression of emotion) that she lived what she said. She built up a unique rapport with the audience who frequently applauded her apparently effortless and natural Bhaavas (facial expressions) and joyous Nritha (rhythmic aspect of dance). It is no wonder that she has been given the titles Kalaimamani, Nritha Choodamani and the Padmashri award.

Chitra's performance was preceded by a Vandanam composed by G. N. Balasubramaniam, melodiously rendered by her husband, R. Visweswaran. The evening's recital commenced with an Anjali--an offering of flowers through the idiom of rhythm and an invocatory piece--*Aanandanartana Ganapatim Bhaavaye* in which Chitra depicted a devotee meditating on the dancing Ganesha.

The major number of the evening was the Padavarnam in Shanmugapriya raaga and Aadi taala--*Devamunivarum Thorum Paadam Jagannaathan*, which invoked Lord Venkataachalapati. The lyrics and music for this number were composed by the famous violin maestro, Lalgudi Jayaraman. In this piece, Chitra, very beautifully blended the rhythmic and mimetic aspects of Dance. She used rhythmic patterns and the lyrics as a frame-work to give the audience vivid visual pictures of mythological stories. She expounded with ease and perfection the ten Avatharaas of Vishnu, the story of the slaying of the evil serpent Kaaliya by Krishna, the story of the destruction of Mahaabali's pride by Vaamana and the Vishwaroopadarshana that was granted to Arjuna by Krishna. This piece was crisp and the emphasis was on Bhakti bhaava which Chitra portrayed very effectively.

By far the most enjoyable piece that evening was the Padam in raaga Sauraashtram and Aadi taalam--*Adhuvum sholluvaal*. In this piece, Chitra interpreted lyrics that told stories about the Uttamanaayika who is betrayed by her lover, Lord Kaartikeya.

Chitra was at her best with Abhinaya in this piece and her depiction of a group of village women gossiping about the slighted Uttamanaayika received repeated applause from the audience.

The next piece was a Devarnaama in Raagamaalika and Aadi Taala--*Neen Yako Ranga, Ninna Nang Yako*, a Purandara Dasa kriti that highlighted Bhakti through Nindastuti. In this piece, Chitra vividly narrated the stories of Prahalaada, Draupadi Vasthraapaharanam in the court of Dhritharaashtra, and the story of Dhruva. The devotee uses these stories to convey to Lord Krishna that he has no need for the Lord himself and that the efficacy of His name was sufficient. Chitra was so effective as a narrator through dance in this piece, especially the humiliation of Draupadi and Krishna's timely intervention, that she moved the audience to tears with her expressions.

The last piece was a brisk Tillaana in Ranjani raaga and Aadi taala in which Chitra gracefully and immaculately presented poses from South Indian temples. She aptly concluded her performance with verses from the Vedas.

There is no denying that Chitra is an extremely talented exponent of Bharatanaatyam and is a treat to watch. It is hard to be part of her audience and not be attracted by her overall charm as a performer. Chitra excels in Abhinaya, has very good Angashudham and rhythm. She covers the stage well during her performance, she has a good stage presence and her choreography is commendable. She also relates well to her audience.

However, if one has to search with an extremely critical eye for aspects of the performance which could do better with a little more attention in a danseuse of the stature of Chitra, it would have to be her occasional indulgent Nritha. In an effort to make her Nritha look exuberant and joyous, Chitra, in rare instances, comes across as being a wee bit too aggressive. This apart, her performance, can be rated among the best ever witnessed in the field of Bharatanaatyam.

Chitra's husband, R. Visweswaran provided melodious vocal support for the performance. It was obvious that he is a musician with class. His proficiency in vocal and instrumental music and Hindustani, Carnatic and Western music are laudable and difficult to emulate. The Chitra and Visweswaran husband and wife team would be unsurpassable if the latter used his voice a little more powerfully when supporting Chitra's dance performances.

Chitra was accompanied on the mridangam by Shankar Jagadesan who did a commendable job. A. V. Unnikrishnan provided good support on the flute and a special mention needs to be made of Chitra's student, Priyadarshini Ramchand who very impressively vocalized jathis through the performance. She also handled the Nattuvaangam adequately. Our local artist, Dinakar Subramanian joined the troupe on the taanpura.

Overall, Chitra and her troupe gave the audience a splendid Bharatanaatyam performance and a memorable evening.

Kala Menon is a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania and has been formerly trained in Bharathanatyam.

Language and the Composer's Moods

D.N. Viswesvaraiah

Having listened for so many years to both Thyagaraja's and Dikshitar's kritis, I cannot help feeling that the composer's moods and cliches can often be conditioned by the language used for the composition. In his compositions, Dikshitar, for e.g., can be very impersonal - the "I" and "me" in his kritis refer to humanity as a whole rather than to himself personally (a great contrast to Thyagaraja's use of "I" and "me"). But when he used the Telugu or Tamil medium in his kritis, Dikshitar can, like Thyagaraja, become somewhat emotional and use such terms as "please come quickly to protect me". An example of such a kriti is in Kapi raga set to adi tala -*Venkatachalapathi ninnu nammithi Vegame nannu rakshiyumayya*. This kriti has Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit phrases interwoven. There are but two of his kritis where he has used non-Sanskrit languages (Dikshitar was learned in Telugu also).

Per Contra, Thyagaraja, while using on rare occasions Sanskrit for a kriti, or for that matter, while worshipping a deity other than his favorite Rama, is somewhat formal, very dignified in his references to the Deity in question and full of generalized Sanskrit Cliches to praise the deity. In this context, his kriti *Nada Thanumanisam* comes to my mind. Also, Thyagaraja's *Jagadanandakaraka* - the Nata Pancharatna is virtually an Ashtothra. However, when Thyagaraja refers to Rama in Telugu, he invariably uses the lowest version in Telugu for addressing the Lord in a

informal tone. He calls him "Era" - a term usually employed by a master while talking to his personal servant. It does not of course mean disrespect, but only attachment and love. After all, even those of us who use the respectful plural term to address the father, mostly use the singular for the mother. But in a Sanskrit kriti, Thyagaraja does not take such liberties and uses only time-honored adjectives.

This idea of mine gets strengthened further when I consider the kritis of the composers, Sri Vasudevachar, and other post Trinity composers. Sri Vasudevachar was extremely learned in Sanskrit and happened to know enough Telugu to be able to compose in that language also. These composers strictly follow the Dikshitar pattern in their Sanskrit kritis as regards both the structure and words (cliches) used. In their Telugu kritis, eg., *Palukuvademira* in Devamanohari, they revert to the Thyagaraja mode, the famous "Ninda Stuti" (praise of the lord through accusation), included! The "Era" pattern is scrupulously followed!

A welcome change is to be found in Papanasam Sivan. He is more integrated; his language - as far as a non-Tamilian can judge - is usually of his own choice, and instead of cliches, he clothes his kritis with solid philosophical truths. Such integration was always a factor in the compositions of Purandara Dasa; he is strictly logical and his approach to God - in terms of the type of words he uses - remain constant.

The above words of mine are somewhat generalized and subjective, and I recommend that these be taken with a pinch of salt.

D.N. Viswesvaraiah is a connoisseur of music with a very profound knowledge of South Indian Classical Music. His daughter, Uma Roy is the President of the CMANA.

Scintillating Vocal Recital by Sudha Raghunathan

Susheela Varadarajan and Kannan Ranganathan

To those of us who have enjoyed Sudha's music in her early days as a vocal accompaniment to the late Srimathi M. L. Vasanthakumari, her recent SRUTI concert did not come as a surprise. When the concert started, though a little behind schedule with a varnam in the janaranjaka ragam Ranjani, we knew that it was worth the wait.

A short and sweet alapana in Varali followed by an elaborate treatment of the Thiruppavai *Aazhi Mazhai Kanna* set the pace for the concert. A neraval at *Vazha Ulaginil* was replete with intricate brigas that demonstrated her maturity in voice culture. Her swaravinyasa in Varali was very pleasing, especially the usage of phrases such as 'Ga Ga Ma, Ga Ga Da, Ga Ga Ni, Ga Ga Ga' gave a lilting touch. A melodious kriti of Papanasam Sivan - *Padamethunai* in Valaji ragam followed Varali. Her subsequent treatment of *Manasuloni* in Hindolam and *Pakkalanilabadi* reminded us of MLV. In *Manasuloni*, I (KR) felt that Sudha overused the phrase 'Da-Ni-Sa, Sa-Ni-Da'. Sudha then showed her own creativity and imagination in *Pakkalanilabadi* particularly in her kalpanaswaram following the kriti which provided a real challenge to her accompanying artistes. A glimpse of the late Sri. G. N. Balasubramaniam was noticeable in the rendition of *Ragasudharasa* in Andholika ragam.

Having put the audience in a state of bliss, Sudha embarked on the main piece of the concert - a Ragam Thanam Pallavi (RTP) in Kalyani. Not pouring out her prowess, she chose the vilamba pace, building the elaborate edifice note by note. She concluded the alapana with a grahabedam (*Eds...Grahabedam is the process of modifying ragas by shifting the base note Sa or the sruthi to various swara sthanas*) at the Chaturuthi Rishabam of Kalyani, gloriously exhibiting the ragam Mohanam (This is also jokingly referred to as Sa-Pa Vimochanam from Kalyani....). Her tanam and pallavi vinyasas were no routine renditions, with every phrase flowing elegantly and smoothly. Her sweep of all three octaves during the swaraprastharam was seemingly effortless. The swaraprastharam though surprisingly only in Kalyani had variety interspersed with sarvalaghu and 'hop-skip and jump' patterns. In fact, at one point when I (KR) heard phrases such as 'Ga-Ri-Ni-Ri-Ga, Ni-Da-Ma-Da-Ni, Ga-Ri-Ni-Ri-Ga', an involuntary cry of appreciation (*sabhash*) escaped from me.

Inspite of having sung for well over 3 hours, Sudha enthralled the audience further with an excellent light miscellany (*thukkadas*) in the way of *Innudayabarade* in Kalyana Vasantham, *Dikkutheriyada kattil* - a ragamalika composition of Subrahmanya Bharathiyar and *Aarumo Aaval* in Maand. She wound up the concert with a pleasing Lalgudi Jayaraman thillana.

Sudha appears to have inherited a wide repertoire from MLV. It was a balanced diet that she fed the audience. Not counting the pallavi and mangalam, she had presented at least one composition of each of the major composers - Purandara Dasa, Thyagaraja, Dikshitar, Papanasam Sivan and GNB and even the language-count could not have been more balanced: Telugu (3), Sanskrit (2), Kannada (4) and Tamil (4).

In our over-zealousness to rave about Sudha's music, we didn't mean to leave out the the performance of the accompaniments. V.V. Ravi had a little bit of a problem in the tone of his violin initially and also went through some nervous moments during the swara kalpana in *Pakkalanilabadi* (Misra-Chapu talam), but came through to do a wonderful job in the RTP in Kalyani and the rest of the concert. He exhibited some mature pidis in the Kalyani alapana and received applause on several occasions. Tiruvarur Vaidyanathan gave excellent mridangam support. The smooth transitions that he displayed in the nadai changes during the thani-avarthanam (especially from chaturasram to Khandam and back to chaturasram) reminded one of the well renowned percussionist Karaikudi Mani. On occasions however, we felt that he over-anticipated Sudha's sangathis which may be due to his familiarity with the vocalist's rendition.

All in all, it was a concert that will linger in our minds for a long time. SRUTI couldn't have ended the 1992 music season with a better performance.

Susheela Varadarajan works as a Pathologist, and is a strong supporter of SRUTI. She is also trained in vocal South Indian Classical Music.

Kannan Ranganathan is a Materials Scientist and an avid listener of South Indian Classical Music. He is also one of the editors of what you are holding in your hands right now...

- *ShreeVidya Shringeri Murthy* of Bridgewater, NJ, a disciple of Padmabhushan Kamala gave a "RANGAPRAVESHAM", on August 29, 1992 at Ravindra Kalakshetra, Bangalore. ShreeVidya has won several dance competitions, performed solo items in Dance Dramas, and has appeared in Public Television, Arts programs and at public functions. Recently, she also gave a dance recital on Nov. 14, 1992 at Sri Balaji Temple, Bridgewater, NJ. Shree Vidya and her parents are members of SRUTI and its supporters.
- *Sivakami Garga*, daughter of Dr. & Mrs. Bhavanandan of Hershey, PA had her arangetram at Harrisburg on Aug. 29, 1992. A special feature of the arangetram was that it was conducted by the Dhananjayans. Sivakami has spent several summers attending camps at Yogaville, VA, with the Dhananjayans. Sivakami and her husband Amulya Garga are from State College, PA and attend SRUTI concerts regularly. Dr. and Mrs. Bhavanandan have been strong supporters of SRUTI since its inception.
- SPIC-MACAY (Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Among Youth) has started a chapter in Philadelphia under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania. They recently had their first program on Oct. 10, 1992 - a violin recital by the renowned *Dr. L. Subramaniam*.
- *Prof. Janakiraman*, a musician and musicologist from Tirupathi University, gave a lecture-demonstration on the "Origin of Carnatic Music Ragams" at the Museum, University of Pennsylvania on Sept. 26, 1992. His tour to the U.S.A. was sponsored by the S.V.Temple at Pittsburgh.
- *Viji Prakash* of Los Angeles, gave a dance drama - "Ramayana" at Drexel University on Nov. 14, 1992. This program was organized by the Indian Student Association at Drexel University - PRAGATHI.
- *Trichur Ramachandran*, a disciple of the great G.N.Balasubramaniam (GNB), gave a vocal concert on June 13, 1992, at the Community Y, Lansdowne, PA. He was accompanied by V.V.Ravi on the violin and S.V.Raja Rao on the mridangam. (for tapes of this concert, see Sruti Tape List....)
- *Seetha Rajan*, a disciple of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, gave a vocal concert on August 15, 1992, at Stein auditorium, Drexel University. She was accompanied by local artistes Radhika Mani on the violin and Satish Pathakota on the mridangam.

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