

**Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (R)**

(Distinguished Service to Carnatic Music since 1955)

# Lalitha Kala Tarangini

Quarterly Music Magazine

Volume 2015, Issue 2

April 2015



## Dr. Bombay Jayashri Ramnath honoured

The title “Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena” for 2015 was presented to Dr. Bombay Jayashri Ramnath in the divine presence of “His Holiness Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar” on 1 Feb, 2015. The Award was presented by Prof. Lakshmi Chandrashekar, well known theatre personality.

The title carries a purse of Rs. One Lakh, a silver medal and a citation. This award is instituted in memory of the founder Shri. G Vedantha Iyengar who started the institution 60 years ago.



*From L to R - Dr. Yogananda, Kum. Anagha, Shri. GV Krishnaprasad, Hon. Secretary SRLKM, Swamiji, Smt. GV Neela, Founder Principal, Dr. Bombay Jayashree Ramnath, Prof. Lakshmi Chandrashekar*

**April 2015**

Dear Readers,

With a heavy heart, I note the passing away of another senior musician Sangeetha Kala Acharya Suguna Purushothaman on 25 Feb, 2015. Starting with MSG last year, the departures have been unabated, making our music world poorer.

She was a great stage artist, a wonderful Musicologist/ Vaggeyakara and above all an outstanding Guru a combination very rare to come across. She, along with Suguna Varadachari mami have made significant impact on the music rasikas that will remain forever in our minds.

She contributed significantly in passing on the famed Musiri bani and her students bear a testimony to this. She was very special for her all round proficiency in music that is very rare to find. The balance between intellect/manodharma, bhavam, layam, neraval singing (Musiri vazhi) etc. were extraordinary. She was an expert at singing Pallavi so much so that she would jokingly say that "I can also sing Anupallavi and Charanam"! She is probably the only person in the current time, who could do a dwi-tala avadhana - the art of singing a Kriti keeping two talas (in two hands) producing synchronising rhythms.

The Music world is glad, she has passed on everything she imbibed to her senior student K Gayathri, who is an automatic choice to take the bani forward. I salute the great soul for her sincerity and devotion to music.

I am glad to note the outstanding success of "Spring Music Festival" something that was unprecedented.

The audience poured in excess of 800 everyday (reaching 4 figure mark on couple of days) and it looked like SRLKM has carved its own set of loyal rasikas. Clearly, the response from the audience is for the sincerity and sacrifice of Hon. Secretary GV Krishnaprasad and his family. The festivity was like a world cup cricket match everyday and mind you they don't have a Facebook page or a WhatsApp account. Just speaks of the impact the organisation has made to the Bangalore Music stage. Kudos to SRLKM and KP..

We are starting a new series to traverse to the great stages of Karnatak music across South India and bring you the history, people associated and current status. This time we take you to "Bedaram Prasanna Seetharama Mandira" a temple of music in Mysore.

We cover two eminent musicians who were associated with All India Radio significantly. Shri. MS Selvapullai Iyengar was an outstanding Guru teaching music through Radio in Bangalore AIR whose 100th birthday is round the corner. Vidwan KS Kalidas in the lineage of Pazhani Subramanya pillai performed for several years at Chennai AIR.

I wish you all A Very Happy Ugadi (belated).

Anand S

**Contributors and Photo courtesies:**

K Gayatri, Rajashree Yogananda, Brinda Manickkavasan, S Krishnamurthy, Sachi R Sachidananda, Deepa Ganesh (Senior Associate, LKT), CP Chikkanna, Thanmayee Krishnamurthy, G Guruprasanna. Photo courtesy - Paniraj, RK Srikantan Trust, M Rajappa Iyer Trust, and The Hindu archive.

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (SRLKM) founded by Shri. G Vedanta Iyengar in the year 1955 is rendering yeomen service in the field of music. In addition to music classes, music concerts are held all through the year. The significant festivals are Sankaranti and Spring music festivals. Mandira also takes pride in conducting music awareness program, music workshops, Lecture demonstrations etc. Entry to all program conducted by the Mandira is free as the aim of the institution is to enable everyone to listen to the best of the music and to propagate Karnatak Classical Music. SRLKM is a Trustee of Karnataka Fine Arts Council (Regd.) which is a consortium of 10 sabhas in Bangalore.

"Lalitha Kala Tarangini" publication is fostered by Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, disseminates knowledge in the area of Karnatak Classical Music and bring to light talent and excellence in this area. We believe this is just another step towards preserving and promoting this great Indian fine art.

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## Lalitha Kala Tarangini - Inbox

Dear Krishnaprasad,  
I am glad to receive the January issue of the Lalitha Kala Tarangini.

The Quarterly magazine is a welcome addition to the literature on music in general and Karnatak music in particular. It is at once attractive and articulate on topics relating to the art and science of music (Lakshya and Lakshana)

Affording opportunities to young students and risikas to interact with the stalwarts in the field and thereby enrich their own knowledge is an excellent trend. The fine article on PSN carried out in the current issue may be cited as an instance. The issue has an archival value as well as it brings back memory the ever shining stars of Karnatak music; Chowdaiah, Nedanuri and Mandolin Srinivasan.

Hearty congratulations to Shri. GV Krishnaprasad whom I have known since his boyhood. A noted mridangam vidwan himself to translate the pious dreams of his revered father Vedanta Iyengar in to meaningful realities. The ever-enthusiastic editor of the magazine, Shri. S Anand richly deserves appreciation for his sense

of aesthetic beauty and total involvement in the cause of Music.

**Shri. S Krishnamurthy, Retd. Director, AIR.**

Dear Shri Anand S,

I have been continuously reading all the issues of the Quarterly – Lalitha Kala Tharangini – thanks to the link provided in [rasikas.org](http://rasikas.org), as also the first edition sent by a friend of mine, from Bangalore; This particular issue is truly weighty – commencing with Shri Neduneri's cover picture, and article, a highly informative and well-etched article written by the highly talented and successful star-duo of Ranjani and Gayatri, the tribute(s) to Mandolin Srinivas (and rare pictures therein), the awards by this organisation and much more. Wishing kudos to Lalitha Kala Tharangini and wish that it is launched as a monthly, or atleast have a floating newsletter or blog before some of that culminates in the Quarterly Publication.

Regards

**Lakshmi Prakash, San Jose,  
CA, USA.**



# Homage

*K Gayatri, Senior Disciple of Suguna Purushothaman Mami*

Suguna "Mami" as I dearly address her has created a vacuum in my life as well as my career. Her passing away has not only been a personal loss but a huge irreplaceable loss to the music fraternity too. She was known for her charismatic, ever-charming, smiling, witty, simple, soft nature which created an impact on each and every student's mind for them to cherish her moments till the very end.



My association with mami began in May 1994 and it just seems like today when I joined her classes. I was 11 years old and was riding a tri-cycle in abhiramapuram when mami had a conversation with my grandmother and that is when she accepted me as her disciple even though she said it would not be possible for her to give private lessons. The class hall would be filled with students with not a single place to sit and there would be interesting theory sessions, tests, quizzes and what not!! Group classes all the way.... challenging sessions, questioning each other, receiving our bit from mami as well rings fresh in my memory. Whenever mami introduced me to someone, she would say "thuru thuru nu cycle ottindu iruppal, enna lakshayame panna maattaa "(this girl would be busy riding her cycle not giving a heed to me!)"

Mami was an epitome of classicism as we all know. She would never compromise on a single sangati of a particular kriti and would always say "thookkathla ezhupinaalum paadanum...andha alavukku saadhagam pannanum "(even if you are woken up in the middle of your sleep, you should be able to reproduce the sangati perfectly...that much practice one should do). Such was her "paataanthara" s'uddham. Can never express in words as to what all I have learnt from her...be it concert planning or stage presentation or tackling a particular situation, she has been a mother to me from the word go. The ease with which she would take up challenges was simply mind-blowing. As an expert in Laya, she would give us exercises and would say "saadhagam saadhagam saadhagam". She made even the complex talas appear so simple but when we tried, it would be such a cumbersome exercise. Without her guidance, I would not have attempted difficult nadais in a pallavi or an avadhanam.

The last four years were a testing time for her. But for her amazing willpower and courage to fight back, she would not have lived through. Every time she was given a chemotherapy treatment, she would suffer for a week and immediately resume classes after a gap of 20 days before her next session. Such was her commitment to the art form. Here, I must mention about two different dance productions for Cleveland Tyagaraja Festival-Ramayana and Mahabharatha for which mami composed the lyrics and set the tune. Both of these productions were composed at The Apollo speciality hospital when she was undergoing chemotherapy. She would say "when you have committed to someone, you should live upto it, otherwise don't". Likewise, last December season 2014, she did a lec-dem at The Music Academy on "Kalpana swaras at different eduppus" which was very well received by all. About a month before she



*Suguna Purushothaman and Suguna Varadachari were most sought after duo. Suguna Purushothaman would do a tala of 7 aksharas in khanda nadai and Suguna Varadachari would maintain 5 aksharas in misra nadai for the same pallavi!!*

passed away, she had committed to Suguna Varadachari mami for a lec-dem on "Pallavis" celebrating her 70 years. Mami asked me to stay back as she was fighting a bad wheeze and other health conditions. In spite of all that, she participated in the demonstration which showed her true devotion to the art.

She was one person to whom I could share anything and everything. She was more than a mother to me and I should say we were such favourite "whatsapp buddies"!! I really miss her messages right from morning till night sharing

all what we did like how we do with best friends.

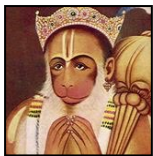
I have literally travelled through her journey receiving all the love and affection that a mother, a teacher, a guide, a mentor, a friend and a baby would give!

Just as how these many years passed by, I only hope and pray time heals my mind . Hope she is reborn soon!

MAY HER SOUL REST IN PEACE.

\*\*\*\*\*

## SV Narayanaswamy Rao National award for TVG



Chamarajapet Sree Ramaseva Mandali will be conferring the SV Narayanaswamy Rao National award to TV Gopalakrishnan. It may be noted that

TVG Sir received his Sangeetha Kalanidhi from The Madras Music Academy during December 2014.

The award presentation function is slated for April 04, 2015 at 6 pm during Sri Ramanavami National Music Festival at Old Fort High School grounds, Chamarajapet, Bangalore.

The award carries a purse of Rs. 50,000, a citation and a memento. Some of the other senior musicians who have been awarded are MS

Subbulakshmi, Dr. M Balamuralimrishna, Padit Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Jasraj etc.



# Homage

*CP Chikkanna*

The death of noted art critic nonagenarian Salem Nanjunda Chandrashekar popularly known as SNC has come as a jolt from blue.

He was a great scholar, an academician, a highly accomplished dancer well versed in Bharatha Natya, Kuchupudi and Kathak, an outstanding journalist/art critic. He possessed sound knowledge of music too. He learnt vocal music from his elder sister Thangamma. Much is not known about his pre-eminence days, except the fact that he was a Mysorean in his young age.

He joined Deccan Herald-Prajavani as assistant editor and moved over to Bangalore. My acquaintance with him was in early 1970's when I was writing letters in readers column for Decan Herald and Prajavani as well as various issues including current affairs, politics and people grievances besides review of music concerts I attended.

He and his colleague, R Sheshadri were great patrons of fine arts in general and published reviews written by enthusiasts despite the presence of official critic the late BVK Sastry.

At that time, the late SNC was the only dance critic of repute and his reviews carried weight and depth which were always highly respected. He never hesitated to come down heavily whenever he noticed deviations from the established tradition as enunciated in the Natya Shashtra.

In the early 1980's, noted Kuchipudi dancer Veena Murthy performed "Bhamakalapam" episode in Bangalore's Bharateeya Vidya Bhavan auditorium in the distinguished presence of former Vice President of India the late BD Jatti. It was well attended by enthusiastic rasikas. Her Guru, the late Dr. Korada Narasinga Rao was



amongst the few characters as the emissary of Bhama and Lord Krishna.

In the next day SNC's review in the Deccan Herald appeared. It read "That Veena, a disciple of Korada Narasinga Rao repeatedly driven home by the obnoxious intrusion displaying his masculine figure which was highly irksome and spoiled the show!. At the same time he was very helpful and sympathetic towards new entrants and never missed arangetram shows and gave valuable tips to the debutants.

He was on the panel of local audition board in Bangalore All India Radio besides All India Panel of judges awarding "A" top ranking to Karnatak musicians in AIR, Delhi. On account of his good offices, many young and outstanding artistes despite opposition from members/musicians from neighbouring states whose criteria was age and seniority were considered. He wrote many reviews of Karnatak Classical LP's (Long Playing records) which were regularly broadcast from AIR, Bangalore.

After his retirement he joined Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and was the honorary editor until his demise. He was always attired in spotless white jubba and Pyjama and was very simple in looks and dealings which were very friendly.

Last December Mr. Anand, Editor of Lalitha Kala Tarangini and I met him at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to request him for a write up on Mandolin Srinivas. It was a very pleasing and unforgettable event that lasted about one and half hours.

He paid glowing tributes to U Srinivas and expressed his deep sorrow at his demise at such an early age. At first he declined to comment on Srinivas's playing as he had not heard his Mandolin concert the entire session and that it would be wrong to assess/judge a musician by listening to one or two concerts for a short duration. He was very firm in his views.

On our persistent requests, he dealt at the limitations of the instrument and its adoption to Karnatak music. He was not ready to accept Veena Balachander's observation that Srinivas produced the effect of Veena on Mandolin. In his view, except the Gottuvadhyam or the Chi-

traveena, no other stringed instrument could produce the subtle gamakas unlike the Veena. Despite the limitation it was Srinivas's artistry and mastery came for high admiration/appreciation.

During the course of our conversation, we sought his memories of great vainikas of Mysore during his younger days. He reeled out a long list starting from Veena Venkatagiriappa up to Dr. D Balakrishna of the present generation. Critically analysing all the four south Indian types, he declared that the Mysore style is SUPREME!

Amongst the wind instrumentalists, Nadhaswaram maestro TN Rajaratnam Pillai and Flute Mahalingam were his favourites. He placed Mali on the high pedestal. He revealed that during his college days, Mali was residing at Mysore with his elder brother about whom Mali was highly respectful and obedient. Under his care he was prompt, punctual and made steady progress in his current engagements.

Untimely death of his elder brother resulted in Mali shifting to Madras and his erratic/abnormal/mischievous attitude developed as a result of this. Amongst his principle disciples, Ramani came in for high praise and his Ramani Academy of flute. He regretted that after Ramani's retirement there is a vacuum in the field of Flute playing.

He was fascinated by the typical Madurai Mani lyers raga alapana. Ariyakudi's base voiced capsule presentation of ragas and songs, birka laden speedy rendering of GNB and the slow tempo of MD Ramanathan of yesteryears.

During our conversation, someone on the phone conveyed to him the death noted Kathak Dancer Sithara Devi and sought his message. After attending to that, he recounted an unforgettable incident with his close friend Dr. HN Narasimhaiah noted educationalist/scientist/social reformer and an intellectual.

During one of their meeting, Dr. Narasimhaiah wanted SNC to write an obituary condoning HN's death so that he can have a firsthand experience of it and how the public society would



react to it since after death he will be unable to read them!. Taken aback by this embarrassing and unusual demand, SNC asked HN to chose a different person since he is not that adept at writing obituaries and he was an art critic.

Although he was 94 years, his memory never faded. He was robust, full of wit, very humorous in quoting anecdotes. The way he went about his work with utmost concentration, the way he interacted with his staff at Bharatiya Vidya Bha-

van mesmerised us. He was a fatherly figure at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. It was 5.30 pm and his staff took leave of him wishing him good bye with a broad smile. He politely declined our help to come down the steps from his office to the car at the gate. He was a self made man!

Alas! We never ever expected that it would be our last visit. His demise has left deep scar in our mind and memory.

## 95th Birth Anniversary of Shri. RK Srikantan

The 95th Birth Anniversary of the Legend Padma Bhushana Vidwan RK Srikantan was celebrated on the 19th of January for 4 days. Former President of India Shri. APJ Abdul Kalam inaugurated the function and felicitated the artists and a sanskrit scholar. Padm Shri Dr. N Ramani and Sri. AV Anand were felicitated with a purse of Rs.50,000, a silver lamp and the title "Srikanta Shankara". The Advaita award was presented to Sri Vidwan Venkatakrishna Sharma with the above cash price and silver lamp and the title "Shaankaraadvaita Tatvagna". Sri Abdul Kalam addressed all aspect of

music in his speech and spoke high about Srikantan. Justice N Kumar presided over the function along with Dr. K Radhakrishna who also spoke high of RK Srikantan.

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike after honouring Srikantan as the best teacher of music earlier, honoured him again by naming the Seshadripuram 1st main road beginning from the police station and ending at Anand Rao circle as 'Padma Bhushana Dr RK Srikantan road'. It was unveiled by Sri. Dinesh Gundu Rao Hon'ble Minister for Food and Civil supplies.



Sitting left to right - Shri AV Anand, Shri Venkatakrishna Sharma and Padma Shri Dr.N Ramani

# Sankranti Festival Concerts

*Rajashree Yogananda*

There are many ways to welcome the new year depending on one's inclination, but SRLKM's way of celebrating the New Year is through music with everyone invited to be part of the celebration. All of us are familiar with the indoor concert hall with its serene ambience where the kutcheris are held most of the time. This year, SRLKM decided to make use of its outdoor open air auditorium for its Sankranti music festival from 2<sup>nd</sup> of January through 9<sup>th</sup> January 2015, the weather playing the perfect host for holding the concerts outside. Vaikunta Ekadasi was celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January this year and as a result all the roads leading to the Devagiri Temple were barricaded and hence the concerts were held from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January.

The outdoor auditorium was used earlier for its Spring Music Festival but the popularity of the festival with the rasikas coming in very large number to attend the concerts made the organisers move to a bigger auditorium to accommodate every one. The very first day of the concert was by the Rudrapatnam brothers RN Thyagarajan and Dr. RN Tharanathan who gave a wonderful start to the concert series with their traditional and purist music. There was a group of people from the US visiting India who were interested to listen to the pure and tradi-

tional Karnatak music and they attended the Rudrapatnam brothers concert and the Veena flute duet by D Balakrishna and V Vamshidhar. They expressed happiness about their concert experience which was definitely new and unique to them.

The second day of the concert was by Smt. Nagamani Srinath followed by a Veena and flute duet by D Balakrishna and V Vamshidhar. Young Flautist JA Jayanth gave a scintillating concert which had the rasikas in raptures. He is one young artist who is set to make a mark in the music field. The other concerts were by Smt. Swetha Venkatesh, Smt. TS Ramaa, Dr. Nagavalli Nagaraj who was very well supported by her daughter and an artist in her own right, Ranjani Vasuki. The last day of the concert saw a violin duet by the sisters M Lalitha and Dr. M Nandini who gave a wonderful finale to the eight day concert series.

The wonderful ambience of the open air auditorium where the concerts were held in the evening with the strains of the classical music filling the air had its own charm and easily could have become an addiction. One was sorry that the festival came to an end. The brighter side - to look forward to it the next year.

*JA Jayanth was in fine nick during his concert*





# Thyagaraja and Purandaradasa Aradana

*Rajashree Yogananda*

January 26<sup>th</sup> is celebrated as Republic Day all over India with gaiety. Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira chooses this special day every year to celebrate and pay homage to Sangeetha Pitamaha of music Saint Purandaradasa and saint Sri Thyagarajaswamy. The Aradhana celebrations are done under the joint auspices of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira and Devagiri Sri Venkateshwara Temple Trust, Banashankari 2<sup>nd</sup> stage in the Divine presence of Lord Venkateshwara.

The temple premises was decked up for this occasion. The programme started with the students of SRLKM as well as others singing the Purandaradasa Devaranamas and Thyagaraja kritis. The practice of singing and paying tribute to Sri Purandaradasa and Sri Thyagarajaswamy makes the youngsters take pride in the rich legacy of Karnatak music as well as to be the future torch bearers. The autobiography of the

singer-saints is also a great learning lesson for the youngsters.

The much awaited singing of the goshti gaanam started on time and elaborate arrangements were made for proper seating arrangements of the musicians along with mikes and good sound system. Smt. GV Neela, the chief founder of SRLKM along with GV Krishnaprasad, Hon. Secretary, SRLKM was at the helm of arrangements and for aradhana singing. Well known musicians were present to sing the pancharatna kritis. The temple premises reverberated with the singing of the Ghoshti gaanam and people had gathered in large numbers to listen.

This year they had chosen well known Karnatak vocalist Sangeetha Kala Ratna Bangalore S Shankar for the honours. The festivity concluded with the serving of mahaprasadam to everyone.



# Profile

Anand S, Editor

Not many in the music field can claim to know 77 year old mridangam vidwan KS Kalidas, an important disciple of Late Palani M Subramania Pillai who was the epitome of all that was great in the art of mridangam and Kanjira in the last century.

One reason for the lack of adequate awareness of Kalidas is that he had not taken up playing mridangam for a living as he was a senior official of the Indian Railways. The other reason is that he had deliberately adopted a low profile in the music world and had never promoted himself.

He holds a degree in mechanical engineering from College of Engineering, Guindy (now Anna University) and belongs to 1960 batch. During that time most students who studied music belonged to traditional musical families who learnt under the ‘guru-kula’ system staying in the guru’s household for 10 to 15 years. Kalidas was an exception as his parents had then settled down in Madras (now Chennai).

From 1956 to 1958, for a period of a little less than two years, Kalidas underwent training under Sri Palani. At that time, Palani was quite reticent in taking on new disciples and it was only due to the strong recommendation of Sri Madurai Subramania Iyer (guru of vidwan GNB) that Kalidas was taken on board.

Kalidas was about 18 years old and had joined the engineering college when he came under the tutelage of Sri Palani. Although the norm in those days was that a senior student of a reputed vidwan taught freshers till they reached a certain level, Kalidas was fortunate in having the Master himself teaching him almost right from the beginning. Under Sri Palani’s coaching, Kalidas progressed very fast and grasped whatever his guru taught immediately. He had not only reached a high degree of scholarship, he came to understand the style and philosophy of the

master. Although one could see from Sri Palani’s demeanour that he was very happy about his disciple’s progress, he would never openly show his appreciation. In fact it was his wife, Kolar Rajammal who would say that “anna”, as Sri Palani was known to his disciples had often commended about the fast progress Kalidas was making and that his tonal quality was very pleasing and his ‘sollu-s’ had excellent clarity.

In fact, Kalidas had learnt mridangam for about four years under vidwan LV Vaidyanathan at Kolkatta, had his arangetram and had also played in over a dozen concerts before he came over to Chennai and entered Sri Palani’s tutelage. Palani however insisted that he had to start all over again from the first lesson, the universal ‘Tha ,Thi, Dhom, Nam’ as the school that he belonged to was entirely different.

Although Kalidas was initially disappointed he realised the logic behind this decision as lessons progressed. Sri Palani’s lessons were unique and progressed in a meticulously logical way with added emphasis on ‘vallinam’ and ‘mellinam’ (the hard and soft beats constituting modulation) and the simultaneous striking of the right (valanthalai) and the left (Idanthalai or ‘thoppi) sides of the mridangam. In most existing styles, the simultaneous playing of the right and left sides is sparse.

By this time, Kalidas had become totally devoted to music and apart from learning had started attending numerous concerts in Chennai.; the unfortunate fallout was that he began to get very low grades academically. Much to his disappointment and dismay, he had to quit learning under Sri Palani although he still managed to attend concerts where Sri Palani played as also hear him play over the radio. By this means he could keep up with the inimitable “Palani style”.

Having got a bachelors degree in engineering, Kalidas joined Indian Railways in early 1962 as





an assistant engineer in Northern Railway. Sri Palani passed away in May 1962 and this distressed him so much that he stopped practicing mridangam totally what to speak of playing in concerts.

However when he was posted as District Engineer in 1968 at Coimbatore, his friends and local musicians persuaded him to come out of his self-imposed exile from music and he started performing in local concerts. Around this time he also got to perform over the radio having come through the audition process. The real turnaround came in 1971 when he got posted to Chennai and; soon, he started performing in concerts in Chennai, Trichy, Coimbatore, Erode etc., often accompanying top musicians of the time. He also started performing regularly over AIR and Doordarshan. He had, in the space of seven years from 1971 to 1978, performed in over 350 concerts. Transfer to Lucknow in 1978 and Delhi in 1983 cut off opportunities in the South but he continued to play in the concerts for Karnatak musicians settled in the North as also those South Indian artists visiting North India.

In 1986, he was transferred back to Southern Railway and posted in Chennai as Chief Signal Engineer but the official work was so heavy that he had to give up public concerts and play only the radio and TV concerts. By this time he had also been promoted to the 'A' grade by AIR. He gave up playing altogether when, on a trip to Taipei in 2000 as a part of musical delegation, he

met with an accident which resulted in a hip injury.

His earliest disciple is his son, K.Ashok, who had his arangetram in 1982 at Lucknow at the age of 14. Subsequently, he joined IIT, Chennai and during a period of 4 years he performed widely, often performing with senior musicians like Sri K.V.Narayanaswamy. He also won many prizes in competitions and performed in several sabhas in Chennai including concerts in The Madras Music Academy. His move to USA in 1990 for MS and Phd degrees at MIT meant that he could play only for musicians visiting USA. In 2005, he returned to India and has started accepting public concerts. He has also been upgraded as an 'A' Grade artist by All India Radio.

Kalidas took voluntary retirement from the Railways in 1992 but did not resume public concerts and performed only in Radio and Doordarshan concerts. He also started teaching a few students in the true Palani style which was a kind of religion for him. Spreading this unique style became his passion.

Being a full-time professional in music has a few important advantages; one could spend more time practicing, play frequently in concerts and gain vast experience. However, one great advantage for a person like Kalidas who has not taken music as his profession is that being financially independent, he does not have to compromise and pander to popular taste.

His energies after retirement have been directed to hearing more and more youngsters coming into the music field, mentoring them, giving lectures, writing in music magazines, and teaching. At present he has about ten students directly learning from him and he does not teach over the internet. One of them came to Chennai from USA and two others from Bengaluru. Two of his grandsons are also learning from him, and the arangetram of the elder one has been conducted. Many of his disciples perform on the stage and a few have already been graded by All India Radio.

Kalidas has taken an undertaking from his disciples that when the time comes they will teach a few students exactly in the Palani style. This is all the more important as there are virtually no

one now who plays in that style. At this rate, the style would disappear totally from the scene. He virtually re-built the shrine of Sri Manpoondia Pillai at Pudukkottai in 1999 which, with years of neglect had become dilapidated. He also formed a trust for maintenance of the shrine and conducting guru pooja for Sri Palani Subramania Pillai at Chennai and Manpoondia Pillai at Pudukkottai. He also got a web-site “[palanisubramaniapillai.org](http://palanisubramaniapillai.org)” opened to benefit vidwans and rasikas.. He has also got a Video DVD on Sri Palani released in 2013.

Although he did not go about seeking honours or favours, he was conferred “Life-time Achievement Award” by Sri Guruvayur Dorai Trust and the title, “Sangeeta Seva Nirata” by Sri Thyagaraja Sangeetha Samajam, Mylapore.

## Padma Awards for Sudha and Kanya

Interestingly two disciples of Maestro MLV (ML Vasantakumari), Sudha Raghunathan and A Kanyakumari were awarded the Padma Bhushan and Padma Sri respectively.

Sudha Raghunathan is a most sought after vocalist during the music season.

Sudha Raghunathan was honoured with “Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena” by Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira before she was awarded the prestigious “Sangeetha Kalanidhi” by the Madras Music Academy and now this second highest civilian honour “Padma Bhushan”. Incidentally Sudha Raghunathan was the youngest to be conferred the Sangeetha Kalanidhi by the Madras Music Academy.

Sudha Raghunathan nurtured her skill by being a disciple of MLV for over 13 yrs after being trained by BV Raman and BV Lakshmanan. She



accompanied MLV in several occasions and was with her till her end. Sudha Raghunathan dedicated her award to her mother and gurus.

A Kanyakumari hails from Andhra Pradesh and learnt under Guru Ivaturi Vijayeswara Rao before she came under the tutelage MLV amma with whom she stayed for close to two decades. Kanyakumari is senior to Sudha Raghunathan in MLV school of music and has created several ragas.

A Kanyakumari is also a recipient of Tamil Nadu Govt. top award “Kalaimamani”.

# Guru KS Kalidas honoured

Brinda Manickavasagam, Disciple of Suguna Varadachari

The Mridangam Maestro Kumbakonam Rajappa Iyer Remembrance Day (Gurusmaranam Day), conducted annually by the family and disciples of the great mridangam stalwart, was recently held at Raga Sudha Hall, Mylapore Chennai on March 5, 2015. On this occasion Senior Mridanga vidwan and Guru, Sri KS Kalidas was honoured. Sri KS Kalidas is an important disciple of Mridangam Legend Pazhani Subramanya Pillai. Smt. Nandini Ramani, Barathanatyam Exponent and Sangeetha Natak Academy Awardee presided and Bombay sisters were the guest of honour.

The foundation awarded Sri Kalidas for his teaching, dedication, devotion and love for the art of mridangam playing. The guests of honour at the function spoke about how Sri Kalidas leads his students in the path that was shown by his guru Sri Pazhani Subramania pillai, and how this style of playing the mridangam is very characteristic, special and not prevalent these days. In his acceptance speech Sri Kalidas traced

his association with his guru (affectionately called as *anna*) and outlined the specialities of his guru's style of playing.

After the felicitation, there was a lecture demonstration by Sri Kalidas, about "Chatusram and its manifestation" in other nadais (gatis) and how it encompasses much more than what one would think. After a brief explanation by Sri Kalidas, two of his disciples, L Subramaniam and Akshay Anand demonstrated the varieties and combinations of chatusra patterns in different nadais.

While concluding the function, the master of ceremony observed that the tonal quality and the special techniques of the Pazhani style are brought to life by the students of Sri Kalidas. He added that the Pazhani style of percussion will never die as it is being passed on by Sri Kalidas without any compromise, in all its glory.





# SRLKM turns 60

*Courtesy "The Hindu" and Deepa Ganesh*



For those of you who have attended Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira concerts would have, at some point or the other, bumped into G.V. Krishna Prasad. The moving force behind the highly successful, meticulously planned and hugely attended concerts is the quiet

Krishna Prasad, who believes in work more than talk. He neither seeks attention nor does he come anywhere near the arch lights, Krishna Prasad works relentlessly behind the scenes. His equally unassuming sister G.V. Neela, who plans the institution's activities with her brother, sits among the audience; SRLKM is an institution known for its commitment to music in ways that are transparent and honest. They manage to put together all the finances on their own, with some help from patrons. Top musicians hold the institution in great esteem, connoisseurs are not far behind.

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira founded in 1955, has turned 60, and if its founder G. Vedanta lyengar was alive, he would have probably said that this is what he dreamt as the future of the institution that started in a modest way. Dedicated to the cause of the promotion of Karnataka classical music, SRLKM is among the leading music sabhas which has earned a fine reputation among musicians and connoisseurs alike.

"We used to live in Mysore. My father was a middle school headmaster," recalls G.V. Krishna Prasad, speaking of his father Vedantha lyengar. He believed that music and education must go hand in hand and made sure that all his five

***Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira has seen 60 glorious years of music. Behind the institution's success are the selfless efforts of an entire family***

daughters and two sons had music training. "They were hard times, it was not easy to run the family. My sisters were also pitching in on the home front," says Krishna Prasad, speaking of his sister G.V. Ranganayakamma who worked as a music teacher in a girl's high school. "She was transferred to Davanagere and between 1951-54, the years that she worked in Davanagere she introduced the veena which was till then, unheard of in that place. Alongside teaching, she even took classes at home apart from giving small concerts." In 1954, an education conference took place in Davanagere and A.G. Ramachandra Rao, then education minister, was among the dignitaries who came for it. Ranganayakamma and her team performed at the inauguration and impressed by the performance, the minister felt that teachers like Ranganayakamma should be located in Bangalore. "I remember everything distinctly. My father had lost his eyesight and he took me along everywhere. We went to the railway station the following day, handed over the application to the







DPI N.S. Hirannaiah in the train, on which he immediately signed, 'Transferred to Bangalore.'

SRLKM came into existence on January 15, 1955 on Sannidhi Road, in Bangalore. Veena, violin and vocal classes began and gradually a lot of students began to come. "My father passed away in 1962, and on his deathbed, my sister vowed to stand by his dream and take care of all of us," says a teary eyed G.V. Neela, remembering the huge role her sister played in steering the organisation to great heights. "It was something that my father instilled in us, he believed in doing things for people. In 1949, he won a Public Service medal from His Highness Maharaja of Mysore." Vedanta Iyengar was not only a respected teacher and scholar, but played a significant role in building orphanages, hostels, maternity homes, child welfare centres. "In the old Mysore region of Saligrama, Holalkere... my father had such a good name," says G.V. Neela. In fact, Vedanta Iyengar was so honest and service minded that Mirza Ismail had great respect for him. For the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Institution, V.V. Giri graced the occasion.

"After I finished my engineering, I worked with a private contractor for a while. At some point I felt that I needed to take up a government job so that it would give me the security to support the institution. My father was a close friend of chief minister Nijalingappa even before he rose to great heights. I wrote a letter to him requesting him to give me a job. He asked his secretary S. Varadan to look into my case, and within a week, I was given a job in the Town Planning department. In the meanwhile, Ranganyakamma, Neela and team had earned a

good reputation; they were invited to sing at every civic reception. Based on their contribution to the cultural scene of Karnataka, in 1972 they allotted this site to us."

For the 25th anniversary Maharajapuram Santhanam was invited, and when hall was built in 1986, K.J. Yesudas inaugurated it. "In 1989, we built the open air auditorium with whatever little money we had and Semmangudi Srinivas Iyengar sang for the inauguration." Over the years, the quality of their programmes began to attract a large number of people and both the hall and open air auditorium was insufficient. "In 2005, Sanjay Subramaniam advised us to move our festival to a bigger hall and ever since we have been doing so," says Krishna Prasad.

Whether it is a leading artiste or an upcoming one, SRLKM keeps all its concerts free. Ranganyakamma-Neela, and Krishnaprasad have put all their earnings to run the institute. They bring leading artistes for music workshops but don't charge the participants. They bring out a magazine dedicated to music. "It is difficult, but this is the way our father wanted it to be, and it is our motto as well. Money should never be the criteria. Many people come on their own and make contributions, we are thankful for their participation. Indians living abroad plan their vacation to coincide with our Spring Festival, which is a big thing for us. My sister Ranganyakamma had been allotted a Housing Board house, we sold that house recently to keep a corpus fund for our festivals and awards. The activities of this Institution should always go on..." says Krishna Prasad.

# Sunil at SRLKM

Anand S, Editor

Sunil Gargeyan winner of this year's "The Hindu MS Subbulakshmi" award gave a brilliant concert at Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira on 22 Feb 2015. He is currently under the tutelage of Sangeetha Kala Acharya PS Narayanaswamy. His previous gurus being Shri. S Bhashyam and Shri. PB Srirangachari.

He was accompanied by Achyuta Rao on Violin and BC Manjunath on Mridangam and the trio gelled well to make it a memorable concert that will linger long in our memory.

With in couple of minutes in to the concert, Sunil gave all the indications that this is going to be an interesting concert by rendering "Calcutta Krishnamurthy's" varnam "Sharanagata vat-sale" in raga Kathanakutuhalam. It is said that this varnam is quintessential Kathanakutuhalam with its grammar preserved in every phrase beautifully. Sunil seems to understand the mood of the audience very well as he rendered few Purandaradasa kritis like "ganapathi yenna paliso," in "Natta", "Baro namma manege" in "Purvi Kalyani" and "Kandena Udipiya Krishna" in "Brindavana Saranga" to the delight of the capacity crowd.

He took us several decades back by rendering, "Samukhana nilva galgunaa" in "Kokila Varali" that was reminiscent of "Musiri Subramanya Iyer". The main item of the concert was a Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi set to 2 kalai Adi Tala in the raga Sankarabarana. The Pallavi "SaRiGaMa-PaDaNiSa paaduvom... Samaganamrutha samara" has an interesting eduppu starting at 8 matra after samam. He did a Sruti bheda showing sketches of Karaharapriya, Todi and Kalyani during the raga essay and the trikala included "Chatusra Tisram" which was excellently synchronised between the youngsters. One got a feeling that Sunil was inspired by Prof. TR Subramanyam, master of rendering such pallavi's.

He sang Sivan's "Srinivasa Thiruvnekata" in raga "Hamsanandi" upon a request from a rasika. and concluded the concert with "Kapada beku taye" in Kamas and a Lalgudi's Tillana set to Raga Desh.

All in all, it was an excellent evening and the youngster gave all indications of significantly contributing to this art form in the days to come.



# Singing the raga of life

Deepa Ganesh, Senior Associate, LKT

Bombay Jayashri – the name draws thousands to concert halls. A name now known in international circles, Jayashri is a picture of grace and quietude. Her intensity as a human being is known more through her music than in real world interactions; Jayashri is a musician of very few words. She was recently felicitated and conferred the title “Sangeeta Vedanta Dhureena” by the Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, and Jayashri, in her characteristic way, offered it to her mother and her gurus.

Jayashri was a little girl when she started learning from Balamani, a dedicated musician and a dear friend of the family. “Very rarely did my parents agree on a single musician. Balamani maami was among the few,” says Jayashri rewinding. They invited her home often and eventually she became the best friend of Jayashri’s parents. Without thinking twice, her musical training began under Balamani. “I was seven years old, when my father passed away. Maami told my mother ‘you take care of the home, and I will take care of the children like Subramaniam used to...’” Jayashri remembers with gratitude. She and her brother would finish school and head to maami’s house. Balamani was extremely caring as a person, nevertheless a taskmaster. “Idli and *molaga podi*” would be waiting for us. Soon after she had fed us, music lessons would start. She was a very strict mother. I was the youngest among her students and her daughter was my age.”

From the beginning, Jayashri was attracted to film songs. She would listen to them,

*Are you happy? I asked her. At the most, I had expected a smile and a nod. But surprisingly, Jayashri said: “It is a big recognition from this wonderful Sabha that treats musicians in a very special way. Also the audience that comes to their concerts shower so much affection that I feel warmly hugged by them. Neela akka and Krishnaprasad sir are such unusual people, this is a very special award.”*

learn them and sing them at school and college. Somehow Balamani maami ‘smelt this’. ‘Why should you sing film songs? ‘Don’t it will spoil your music,’ she would categorically say. “But I was so adamant that I wouldn’t listen to her. I continued to do what I was doing.” Jayashri, in the meanwhile had also started learning Hindustani music. While Balamani kept saying, “I can hear Hindustani in your voice”, her Hindustani teacher would say, “Tumari awaaz se badboo aa raha hain”. “I was learning both parallel and was happily lying to both of them.”

It so happened that Jayashri happened to go for a Lalgudi Jayaraman concert. “It was inexplicable. On listening to him, something within me lit up. A space that was hitherto unknown to me opened up. I just wanted to pack my bags and go learn from him.” Known to the family, Lalgudi made the young girl sing for him and







appreciated her ability. Many months later when Jayashri went to Chennai for a contest, Lalgudi heard her again. “Why have you wasted seven months. Come tomorrow,” he told her.

The following morning, Jayashri remembers, she was at Lalgudi’s house at 8 a.m. She soon realised that she was in for many surprises; it was a world that was completely different. Lalgudi would be totally involved in playing Bahudari and a few moments later he would be recalling the Hindi song “Megha Chaaye”. Before Jayashri could recover from this huge leap, “As if in a trance he would say ‘Lata has magic in her voice’. He would close his eyes and become emotional about the power of music. The next morning he would be back to Todi raga, and the following day he would discuss Michael Jackson’s passion...”. In those years, Jayashri felt that all her eclectic interests were for a reason. It had to culminate in a guru like Lalgudi as a reaffirmation of the greatness of music. “I was just out of college. Neither did I have a focus in life nor any idea of the Karnatak music world. Don’t go back to Bombay, my guru said. Just give yourself completely to Karnatak music, he insisted,” recalls Jayashri.

“My mother of course didn’t like me moving to Chennai, but she perhaps sensed that there was a larger purpose to it all,” explains Jayashri. In those years of learning, it was an everyday goal,

from one week to the other, practicing and perfecting. Her guru, the music he imparted, and practice – nothing else existed in her world for nearly four years. Lalgudi slowly began to introduce her to Sabhas, and in those days of no cell phone, post cards came requesting her for short, 30 minute duration concerts. “Go and sing,” Lalgudi would say, but took meticulous care about her travel, fellow musicians, and all the nitty-gritties. With encouragement, also came concern. “Don’t take up too many concerts. Learning is not about performing. You need time to think and refill. Keep on working towards perfection, a successful concert hardly means anything,” he would tell Jayashri.

In the meanwhile, Jayashri’s uncle in Chennai was getting a bit worried about his niece’s seriousness in music. “It’s time you took up a job in a bank or as a school teacher. It’s also time you got married,” this timely advice came every now and then. “They couldn’t see my point. But after a while, it didn’t bother me too much. I knew what I was doing, I was fully aware of its value, I didn’t feel that people should be with me in this.” Women are constantly bogged down by the world—physically and mentally, but Jayashri’s goal was to remain strong, practice harder and sing better.

These days, after steadily rising to the top and holding sway over her audiences, there are



questions that Jayashri tries to find an answer to. "Many of these compositions I sing were created and sung way back. I started singing them at an age when I didn't even know what they meant. Slowly, I have grown with them. But why do people want to listen to me? Many stalwarts have sung them all before me. What newness can I bring?... I keep asking myself these questions, and haven't found answers." Every morning, Jayashri says, if she wakes up and practices Todi for the rest of her life, she will be able to get only to the tip of the iceberg. "That's the truth, and that is my everyday journey – to move closer and deeper. But after all these years of performance, I do ask myself these days – *ivaladaana?*"

The urge to do more with music translates into Svanubhava, Karnatak music children's choir, jugalbandis, Listening to Life and several other endeavours that Jayashri has been a part of. "Hitham" is a new addition to her musical journey. "Through Hitham, we want to take music to the socially marginalised. Also to autistic children and orphans. My students and their families have given me total support, without which it would be difficult to do this." In a village called Manjakudi, Hitham trains around 350 rural children in Karnatak music. It is important to include several sections of the society into the experience of music. There's a lot for all of us to do, but it will still remain a spec," Jayashri feels.

Though Chennai is the seat of Karnatak music, it has also become a power centre. With so many musicians expanding their roles socially, beyond the concert stage, will the moment of metamorphoses for Karnatak come soon? "I am sure it will be more inclusive. It has to change and change for the better. I am so happy that I am not sitting comfortably and hoping that change will drop down from heaven. We are not doing anything like we did in the past. We are flipping through life like we flip through television channels... I am hoping that more meaning will come to both life and music," Jayashri says with concern.

## Our Forthcoming Programmes

**Saturday, 11 April, 2015, 5 pm**

(SRLKM auditorium)

Dr. TS Sathyavathi

(Lecture-Demonstration : *Thana and Pallavi*)

Sandya Srinath - Violin

BC Manjunath - Mridangam

**Sunday, 12 April, 2015, 5 pm**

(SRLKM auditorium)

RK Shriramkumar

(Lecture-Demonstration : *Importance of compositions for manodhrama*)

Charulatha Ramanujam - Violin

BR Srinivas - Mridangam

**25 and 26 April, 2015, 6 pm**

(Dental College Auditorium, JP Nagar)

Vishaka Hari

(Musical discourse in English - *Narada Bhakti Sutram*)

Mudikondan Ramesh - Veena

Charulatha Ramanujam - Violin

HS Sudhindra - Mridangam

Sukanya Ramgopal - Ghatam

**Sunday, 03 May, 2015, 5.30 pm**

(SRLKM Auditorium)

Prashanth Iyengar - Veena

BS Prashanth - Mridangam

S Sri Sailan - Ghatam

**Sunday, 07 June, 2015, 5.30 pm**

(Mangala Mantapa, NMKRV College, Jayanagar)

1500th Concert of the institution and "Raga Laya Prabha award presentation" to HM Smitha and BC Manjunath by Sangeetha Kalandhi Sudha Raghunathan, followed by her concert;

Sudha Raghunathan - Vocal

Embar Kannan - Violin

Neyveli Skandasubramanyam - Mridangam

R Raman - Morching

# Bidaram Krishnappa Rama Mandira

Sachi R Sachidananda



Bidaram Krishnappa

What is a sacred space for music? Just as we consecrate a temple, with the praana pratishthapana of the idol, “opening of the eyes”, chants and ceremonies, can we also create a sacred space for music? What are the chances of there being a music

hall, outside of a historic temple or palace, transforming itself into a temple for classical music?

Can the great musicians and devotees who visit such a music hall invest it with vibrations that act as a timeless inspiration for musicians and rasikas alike? For answers, one has to visit the Bidaram Krishnappa Prasanna Seetharama Mandira in the heart of old Mysore, which many believe to be an example of such a sacred space.

Over time, Mysore has been called home by many great musicians. One such great Karnatak musician was Mysore Sadashiva Rao

(1800?-1870?). This composer, credited as the progenitor of the Mysore bani, pioneered Ramanavami music festivals, which took place in a worshipful setting. But all these concerts were then held on temporary premises. There was an unarticulated need for a good music hall.

Gana Visharada Sri Bidaram Krishnappa was a disciple of Veene Sheshanna, who was a disciple of Sadashiva Rao. He had the vision of a great Rama Mandira for music. He worked relentlessly to realize his dream. As a result, the Prasanna Seetharama Mandira was constructed in 1928.

Krishnappa's father Vishwanathaiyya, a Saraswath Brahmin, had come over at the invitation of royalty as a part of a Dashavatara theatre troupe from Dakshina Kannada region. Because the theatre troupe set up their camp when they relocated to Mysore, the epithet Bidaram (=camp) stuck. After his father's demise, Bidaram Krishnappa's family fell on bad times. To eke out a living, a young and bright Krishnappa used to sit and sing devotional songs in front of Kote Anjaneya temple. Passers-by used to give him some coins. His fortunes brightened only when a rich merchant, Sahukar



Thimmappa, spotted his musical talent after hearing him a few times in front of the temple. Thimmappa arranged for Krishnappa's rigorous musical training under Karur Ramaswamy, and later under Veene Sheshanna and others. By sheer hard work, Krishnappa blossomed and became known throughout south India as a good vocalist.

Krishnappa was a devout bhakta of Sri Rama and Hanuman. He developed a great desire to create a permanent, beautiful Rama Mandira as a sacred space for music. Local circumstances and fluctuating royal patronage only strengthened his resolve. He never stopped seeking and collecting funds from friends and admirers for the Mandira.

Mysore Vasudevachar states in "With Masters of Melody" (author: S. Krishnamurthy): "Rama Mandiras were the usual places of musical concerts in those days. Krishnappa had performed in almost every one of them and associated himself with their work in many ways. None of them had a building that was impressive, or a concert hall which could be termed adequate. He decided to do something about this and set out on a musical tour of south India. His concerts not only secured a place of pride in Mysore in a larger cultural heritage but also brought in ample funds for the Rama Mandira he wanted to build. The present Sri Prasanna Seetharama Mandira at Mysore stands as a glorious testimony to Krishnappa's devotion to Rama and his own attainments in music."

Krishnappa's disciple, T. Chowdiah joined him on the concert "circuit" tour of south India. Chowdiah's recent innovation, the resonant seven-stringed violin, had caught the imagination of the public. Krishnappa saved all the concert fees collected on the tour for his project of the Rama Mandira.

One of Krishnappa's patrons was a rich merchant of Madras, Alwar Chettiar. He once suffered a huge loss in his business and went into depression and his health suffered badly. On the family's request, Bidaram Krishnappa went from Mysore, and he sang daily to Alwar Chettiar for a few weeks. Miraculously, Alwar Chettiar re-

covered. Chettiar's family asked Bidaram Krishnappa what they could offer as a token of gratitude. Construction of the Rama Mandira was forever fresh in Bidaram Krishnappa's mind and he asked Alwar Chettiar and his family to donate a few girders required for the roof of the Rama Mandira.

Krishnappa started the construction of the Rama Mandira and spent all his life's savings in making the Rama Mandira a reality. He even got his wife Smt. Thungamma to sell her mangalasutra to fund the construction of the Rama Mandira.

Krishnappa used great imagination in constructing the Rama Mandira. The Rama Mandira was built with a main hall that seated about 200 people and included four small rooms in the four corners. In the ornate wooden sanctum sanctorum at the west end was installed a large and extremely beautiful oil painting of Shri Rama Pattabhisheka depicting Lord Ramachandra and Seetha surrounded by Lakshmana, Bharatha, Shatrughna and Anjaneya, painted by Krishna Rao of Mysore. The south and north faced entrances featured triple-arched colonnaded portico design and the beautiful cornice work. Statues of Lakshmi and Saraswathi crowned those entrances.

Krishnappa commissioned a well-known painter, Achar of Mysore, to produce oil paintings (4'x3") of Dashavathara. Each painting was framed in a uniquely artistic teakwood frame and placed high on the walls all around. Similarly framed Smaller oil paintings (2'x2.5') of Adi Shankaracharya, Madhwacharya and Ramanujacharya along with those of vaggeyakaras and musicians from the late 19th and 20th century (Patnam Subramanya Iyer, Maha Vaidynatha Iyer, Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar, Todi Raghavaiyer, Palght Rama Bhagavathar, Parameshwara Bhagavatar, and Veena Sheshanna).

Any receptive person will be touched by the ambience of the hall and the aura of these paintings. Krishnappa completed the construction of the Mandira in 1928. He conducted the annual Ramanavami celebrations with music concerts of well-known musicians from south



India. There were also monthly Pradosha concerts featuring local artistes.



Over time, the Ramanavami concerts in Prasanna Seetha Rama Mandira became very famous. Great artistes like Muttiah Bhagavathar, Karaikudi Brothers, Palghat Rama Bhagavathar, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Vasudevachar, Tiger Varadachar, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Alathoor Brothers, Mysore T. Chowdiah, Musiri Subramanya Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, G.N. Balasubramanyam, Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, Papa Venkataramiah, T.R. Mahalingam, M.S. Subbulakshmi, D.K. Pattamal, M.L. Vasanthakumari, T. Brinda, T. Mukta and many other Vidwans and Vidushis have given soul-stirring concerts in this hall.

What was the effect of this temple of music on the cultural scene? For the first time, Mysore's welcome to great classical musicians obtained a focus in an artistic public venue, a devotional context, and an inspiration generated by Mysore musicians themselves. On Vasudevachar's return from Tiruvaiyyaru after his musical tutelage under Patnam Subramanya Iyer, there had come a new flavour to the Karnatak music heard in Mysore. There was an osmosis of musical ideas between the stalwarts of the Tanjore delta and Mysoreans. The impact of Bidaram Krishnappa Rama Mandira was like a force multiplier. The Mandira provided a prestigious platform for musicians to give their best. Although concerts were ticketed, year after year, the audiences got to hear the best of the best. This cultural phenomenon has lasted nearly 90 years.

Now some interesting recollections of stalwarts.

In the book "R.K. Srikantan" by K.Muralidhara (pub. By Udayabhanu), it is stated that a young Srikantan was greatly inspired after listening to Ramanavami festival concerts in Bidaram Krishnappa Rama Mandira, delivered by the greats such as Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Musiri Subramanya Iyer, Karaikudi brothers, Parur Sundaram Iyer, Papa Venkataramiah, Rajaratjinam Pillai, Meenakshi Sundaram, Murugabhoopathy and others. Their singing quality as well as their comprehensive artistry inspired him enormously. Their varied individual styles of presenting priceless krithis of Karnatak music, their musical explorations rooted in research, and their willingness to share, guided him in his future musical journey.



*Unveiling of Portrait of Shri. Puttu Rao*

S. Krishnamurthy, grandson of Mysore Vasudevachar, recounts an episode in his book, "Vidwan Mysore T. Chowdiah" (pub. Vasantha Prakashana). The Alathur brothers were going to perform in Bidaram Rama

Mandira. They were to be accompanied by Chowdiah on the violin. Some well-wishers came and told Chowdiah that morning the brothers would present an extremely difficult pallavi in a complex tala and eduppu to embarrass Chowdiah. Chowdiah brushed aside what seemed to be a baseless rumour, saying he wasn't perturbed whatever pallavi they sang and the Almighty would take care of it. But something bothered him at the back of his mind.

In the evening, in the side-room in Bidaram Rama Mandira, the Alathur brothers were sitting, tuning the tambura. Chowdiah arrived, and set about perfectly tuning his violin. After about 15 minutes, Chowdiah broached the topic: "how



is it that you do not follow our system in doing anuloma viloma for a pallavi?" "How is your system, Chowdiah?" Chowdiah sang a pallavi and said, "you see, this is how we do padagarbha (arudi) in our system. But it doesn't seem to be done as such in yours". "Why not, let us show you." Saying this, the brothers sang a pallavi in matya tala in Shanmukhapriya and demonstrated the nuances. "But where is the padagarbha, if you please"? "Of course, where was it missing?" Saying thus, the brothers sang the pallavi line several times over and demonstrated all aspects. By now, Chowdiah had understood fully the intricacies of this pallavi line, and said cheerfully, "Wonderful! This is a lovely pallavi. I suggest you sing this very same pallavi this evening. This would be new to most of the experts in the audience. Hope you will present it". "Of course, now that you say so, so be it". So saying, the brothers went on to the stage. The concert was a great success. The pallavi was particularly fine and the brothers and Chowdiah bettered one another in the rendition. Chowdiah cast a meaningful glance towards his well-wishers who had carried the tale that morning.

Krishnamurthy also recalls an occasion in early '30s when Vasudevachar sang in Bidaram Rama Mandira to the accompaniment of Chowdiah on the violin and Dakshinamurthy Pillai on the mridangam. Vasudevachar asked his young grandson to sit on the stage and put tala. The famed vidwan Dakshinamurthy Pillai showed his concern that such a green horn was on the stage to put tala. Vasudevachar said, "He is Krishnamurthy, my grandson. He has learnt music. Kindly allow him to put tala. It will be an honour and blessing for him." Krishnamurthy recalls that he acquitted himself well enough to receive appreciation from the mridangam wizard afterwards.

After the passing of Bidaram Krishnappa in 1931, Chowdiah took over and ran the Rama Mandira according to his master's wishes. Chowdiah's fame as a violin wizard and his contacts with the top musicians attracted a steady stream of great vidwans to the Rama Mandira. The two secretaries of the Rama Mandira were Chowdiah and the famous advocate K. Puttu

Rao. Puttu Rao's was a name to reckon with in Mysore music circles. He was the patron and host to many famous artistes. His son, K. Srikantiah ("A home called Parvathi"), has many anecdotes about the Rama Mandira. He recalls how during one Ramanavami festival Maharajapuram Vishwanatha Iyer was performing. The ticket collection that day was below par. An anxious Puttu Rao sent Srikantiah home in the middle of the concert to fetch Rs 100.- from his room, and this was added to the collection so that there was adequate remuneration for the artiste.

During 1940's, Chowdiah started the Ayyanar College of Music on the Rama Mandira premises. V Ramarathnam was the vice-principal. It was important to get a government grant for the college in order to pay well to the teachers. Srikantiah, as a budding lawyer, did the necessary paperwork and got his father's signature on the application. After receiving the government grant, the music school ran smoothly for many years under Ramarathnam.

Srikantiah recalls a troublesome period in the '50s when the Rama Mandira was almost taken over as a private property ill-advisedly by the descendants of Bidaram Krishnappa. Puttu Rao and Chowdiah were greatly disturbed when an unauthorised construction came up overnight behind the main hall of the Rama Mandira. The Rama Mandira, so painstakingly built as a public institution by Bidaram Krishnappa, was about to be lost to private parties. Puttu Rao used his legal acumen and obtained permission from the Advocate General Sri Ethirajulu Naidu in Bangalore to lodge a case. He acted as the prosecution witness and a well-known lawyer in Mysore was enlisted to argue the case. To their relief, the judgement came in favour of the public trust. The district judge complimented the public spirit and able conduct of the witness, Puttu Rao. Posterity would be beholden to Puttu Rao and Chowdiah for ensuring the continued functioning of this great institution, Bidaram Krishnappa Rama Mandira. When Puttu Rao expired, his picture was unveiled in the Rama Mandira by Chowdiah and government dignitaries.

In the last few decades, the tradition of Ramavami festivals has continued unabated, thanks to the efforts of the administrators viz. Padmanabha Rao, Narasimha Murthy, Keshavamurthy, Prof. Arkanath and Lakshmi Narayan. Some years ago, the Rama Mandira undertook a major restoration of the paintings. 40 paintings were scientifically restored to their pristine glory under the supervision of C.S. Jayaramasundaram, who headed the Scientific Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India. The job took several weeks under expert supervision to consolidate the pigments, and carry out the chemical treatment to remove the yellow and old varnish and improve the tonal quality of the paintings. The ornate wooden frames posed their own challenge.

The Rama Mandira renovation program received support from many rasikas in India and USA. At the age of 91, noted musician and teacher Ramarathnam provided the much needed funds for the renovation by donating the award money he received from the “Kanaka Purandara Award for 2007” from State of Karnataka.

Next year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the Rama Navami celebrations started by Bidaram Krishnappa (held elsewhere before the Rama Mandira was built). The current administrators have ambitious plans to continue the tradition with the active participation of noted musicians in Mysore.

## State Honour for MSP (from the archives)



The Senior Vidwan Sri MS Selvapullai Iyengar (75 years) hails from a musical family and is receiving from the Karnataka Sangeetha Nrutya Academy their recognition and award for the year 1989-1990. Born in 1915 in Melukote, Sri Selvapullai Iyengar began his musical

training under his father Mantri Sampathkumaracharya. He later received advanced training under Tanjavur N. Ramaswamy Iyer and Sri Bidaram Krishnappa. He also acquired general education and passed matriculation (SSLC). Desirous of exploring deeper dimensions of the art, he enrolled at the Music College in Chidambaram and received instruction under greats such as Sabesha Iyer and Tanjavur Poniah Pillai.

Sri Selvapullai Iyengar has given hundreds of recitals in music conferences all over the country and has received generous appreciation from connoisseurs and commoners alike.

### *Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira tribute to MSP on the occasion of his 100th birth anniversary*

His performance in front of the Mysore Maharaja has earned him generous praise.

Sri Selvapullai Iyengar joined the Mysore Akashvani (AIR) station as a staff artiste and retired in 1975. His own musical performances during this period as well as programmes aired under his direction have been popular.

Having received the “Sangeetha Bhushanam” degree from Annamalai University, Sri Iyengar has been honoured with many titles, including honours from Bangalore Gayana Samaja (Sangeetha Kala Ratna) and Mysore Hanumajayanathi Utsava Samithi.

The Karnataka Sangeetha Nrutya Academy is delighted in conferring its title of “Karnataka Kalathilaka” on such a distinguished artiste as Sri Selvapullai Iyengar today 26 March, 1990.

# Down memory lane

*S Krishnamurthy, Retd. Director, All India Radio (Grandson of Mysore Vasudevacharya)*



I had known Manthri Sampath Kumar Acharya Selvapullai Iyengar (MSP), since about 1945. After doing his Sangeetha Bhushanam course at the Annamalai University, he came down to Mysore seeking royal patronage. He called upon my grandfather (Mysore Vasudevacharya) and sought his guidance. Grandfather introduced him to the contemporary greats as well as the concerned palace officials. Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, the then ruler, was impressed with his musical attainments and rewarded him suitably. Dr. MV Gopalaswamy, professor of Psychology at the Mysore University and the founder of the private broadcasting centre at his residence “Vital Vihar” in Mysore, recognised the scholarship and talent of MSP and utilised his services for broadcast.

Later when the Govt. of Mysore took over the private institution under its fold and named it “Akashavani”, MSP was appointed as a staff artist. RK Srikantan joined him a little later. Before long the duo became household names in music circles. While Iyengar conducted music lessons over the AIR for senior students of “Gana Vihara”, RKS handled junior classes. Both of them were hailed as ideal Gurus and held in high respect. Many of their students became professional performers and graded artists of AIR in due course.

MSP was hugely sought after as a music teacher. Before and after his official duties, he went round the city briskly on his cycle to fulfil his crowded schedule. MSP was another name for punctuality and discipline.

It was MSP who organised the broadcast of Muthuswamy Dikshitar’s Navavarna kritis as well as the Navarathri kritis of Maharaja Swathi Tirunal during Dasara festivities. MSP and RKS who sang the kritis in a duet made an ideal combination. Their voices blended admirably and made the listening heavenly! MSP and RKS were known for authenticity and tradition.

When I joined Akashavani in 1947, I had plenty of opportunities to work closely with the two musician scholars and get to know from close quarters their in-depth proficiency as broadcasters. MSP’s younger brother MS Ramaswamy Iyengar and I were college mates and this made my contact with MSP more intimate and frequent.

When AIR Mysore was shifted to Bangalore, MSP and RKS settled down in Bangalore. Veena maestro Doreswamy Iyengar, MSP and



RKS formed a wonderful trio and made most memorable and significant contributions to AIR music wing.

The monthly music magazine-Sangeetha Samrajya broadcast from AIR, Bangalore, proved highly popular. Doreswamy Iyengar and I planned and produced the serial broadcast. Each edition of the magazine would bring to focus an unpublished and precious composition. This assignment was invariably earmarked for “RudraKote Brothers; “Rudra” from Rudrapatnam Srikantan and “Kote” from Melukote Selvapullai Iyengar provided the base for this nomenclature, for which I plead guilty along with the late Gottfuvadyam Varahaswamy. MSP had with him a treasure house of rare and unpublished compositions neatly notated. All my efforts to persuade him to get them published proved futile. However intricate and unfamiliar was the composition, they would master it in no time and get ready for the recording. This remarkable ability is hard to find, indeed!

The 72 Melakarta Ragamalika of Ramaswamy Dikshitar sung by MSP and RKS may be cited as an instance. MSP and RKS participated in almost all the operas produced by me and Doreswamy Iyengar and broadcast over the national network.

MSP looked a reserved person but had a keen sense of humour.

When AIR was mourning the demise of Mahatma Gandhi, music programmes were broadcast without the lively percussion accompaniment. Accordingly MSP who was preparing the schedule of duties for staff artists had dropped the Talavadya artists in the chart. The Ghatam artist who wished to make sure that his services were not required asked MSP “Sir, now that the ghatam accompaniment is not required, may I go home?” pat came the reply ‘When the ‘ghata’ (Physical frame) of the great mahatma himself is shattered, who would want your ghatam?

MD Ramanathan was performing at the Prasanna Seetharama mandira, Mysore. He had opened the concert with “Vandenishamaham” a Hamsadhwani kriti of Vadudevacharya. After rendering the pallavi and anupallavi of the kriti, immersed as he was in the splendor of Hamsadhwani, inadvertently, switched over to the “charana” of Dikshitar’s ‘Vathapiganapattim’ to the utter amusement of the audience! RKS who was seated next to MSP, sarcastically asked MSP “whose composition is this?” “Vasudeva Dikshitar’s”, whispered the witty MSP without a moments wavering.

My salutation to the great musician, colleague and a friend!

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*Today organisations are making sports personalities their brand ambassadors. In a similar fashion, great musicians and instrumentalists can be sponsored as brand Ambassadors by organizations. Such sponsorships will enable the artists to undertake training of youth who have an aptitude to learn vocal or a particular instrument even though they may not have adequate finances to take it up as a profession. The sponsorship will also help to create certain amount of scholarships to musically inclined students as a full time professional training activity.*

**APJ Abdul Kalam, at the 95th Birth Anniversary of Shri. RK Srikantan**

# Vishesha Fine Arts honours

Courtesy Vishesha Fine Arts Souvenir 2015

"Vishesha Fine Arts" spearheaded by Vani Satish and Mysore Satish has completed 4 years of Purposeful existence in Bangalore. They have been serving the music community with musical Education, scholarships, work-shops, performances, honouring and supporting artists and music organisers/custodians. It has been a seamless continuation for the institute after serving the music community in the USA for over 12 years.

The institute conducts annual music festival "Vishesha Utsava" where prominent musicians and music organisers are felicitated. On the occasion of Vishesha Utsava-2015, the institute honoured three Significant contributors to music namely Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. N Ramani, Shri. GV Krishnaprasad and Vid. KU Jayachandra Rao. As part of the festival, many musicians and upcoming artists were offered to perform for three days and the festival was a big success.

## **Vishesha Acharya to Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. N Ramani**

Karnatak music has seen ever so many great musicians some of them being divine people who have become immortal. They will remain in the history for Karnatak music till it lives. Legend Dr. N Ramani belongs to such an elite group.

The name of Dr. N Ramani is synonymous with flute. So strong is the association that he is better known as "Flute Ramani". He is responsible for making this divine instrument ever so popular. His treatment of trinity's kritis highly creative adaptation of the instrument to bring out the beauty of the ragas, speed and complexity of his sangatis and manodharma has constantly transported the rasikas to ecstasy. He is a true inheritor of the famed "Mali" legacy, he is ever full of gratitude to his maternal uncle and Guru "Mali".

*Lot of thoughts and creativity go in to the Vishesha awards. pictures of Vishesha Acharya or his Guru is specially hand painted and the award replicas are specially designed and hand crafted every time so that it is exclusive. Just shows the effort and sincerity that go in to making of these awards....*



Vishesha Fine Arts is truly grateful to Dr. N Ramani for so kindly agreeing to receive its humble token of respect and appreciation, and confers upon him the title "VISHESHA ACHARYA" at the Vishesha Utsava on February 15, 2015

## **Vishesha Kala Poshaka to Shri. GV Krishnaprasad**

The fine arts have prospered over the centuries thanks to the munificent patronage of erstwhile kings and rulers. With the passage of time, the onus of sustaining and propagating our culture has fallen on well-meaning individuals and institutions. Among the foremost institutions that have made exemplary contribution in this regard is the "Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira", Bangalore. The institution owes its success to Shri. GV Krishnaprasad, a highly respected and



admired organiser and teacher, and his sisters Late GV Ranganayakamma and Smt. GV Neela, both accomplished musicians and teachers.

Shri. Krishnaprasad is held in high esteem by musicians and music lovers alike. He has made a unique and unmatched contribution to the cause of promotion of the fine arts a path set out by his father Late Shri. Vedanta Iyengar who will be very proud of what his children have accomplished.

Vishesha Fine Arts is indeed privileged to honour such a selfless servant of fine arts, and is proud to confer upon him the title of "VISHESHA KALA POSHAKA" at its annual Vishesha Utsava on February 15, 2015.

#### **Vishesha Kala Chetana to Vid. KU Jayachandra Rao**

Vidwan KU Jayachandra Rao is an accomplished Mridangam Vidwan in the big league of musicians. He is busy and much sought after accompanist, who belongs to the relatively rare list of left-handed player. Born on May 19, 1970, Jayachandra has journeyed from Mulki in South Karnataka, close to the border with Kerala to Mysore and then on to Bangalore. His schooling happened at Mulki, but his parents emphasised that the learning of music must happen concurrently with formal academic education. His father Sri. K Raghavendra Rao served as Profession of Commerce at the College in Mulki and, being a capable flautist himself encouraged his sons to play the instrument. Jayachandra's

mother Smt. KR Prema Rao could also play the violin, and she disciplined her children in to practising everyday. Recognising Jayachandra's penchant for percussion, his father let him switch to Mridangam. Jayachandra's brother has gone on to become a very capable flutist. Jayachandra learned the mridangam from Trichur Narayana Pisharady for eleven years. He is all praise for his first Guru for his innovative and highly effective teaching methods.

Jayachandra Rao was immersed in to Tanjavur school when Vidwan Sri. Kamalakara Rao, friend of his father recommended that he should learn from Shri. Palghat TR Rajamani, son of Palghat Mani Iyer. He accumulated wealth of knowledge especially the art of accompaniment in association with Rajamani.

He practises the praiseworthy philosophy that the percussionist must first be a musician and that his role is to embellish the music of the main artiste. This is a reassuring thought and is a shining example for young percussionists to emulate.

Jayachandra Rao has been felicitated with number of titles and has accompanied several senior musicians like Dr. Balamurali Krishna, Prof. TN Krishnan, Dr. N Ramani etc.

Vishesha Fine Arts takes pride in conferring upon Sri. KU Jayachandra Rao the title of "VISHESHA KALA CHETANA" at the Vishesha Utsava on February 15, 2015



# Progenitors of the Lalgudi Bani

Thanmayee Krishnamurthy, Disciple of TM Krishna

*Lalgudi family offshoot is a very important and most productive of the Saint Thyagaraja lineage. The tradition has been passed on from Shri. Lalgudi Rama Iyer and it is currently residing with the youngsters Lalgudi GJR Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi the son and daughter of illustrious Lalgudi Jayaraman. Thanmayee Krishnamurthy spoke to them to find out the essence of Lalgudi Bani...*

*How were your days as students and children of a great maestro?*

GJR Krishnan: I was initiated into music at a very young age. Our house was always filled with music. My father teaching his students and his practice sessions, either alone or with other musicians, filled the house with the fragrance of music. Those days radio also carried lot of music. We were hearing Margazhi Bhajanais and so on. Anything and everything in our childhood was linked to music.

Those days, my father was very busy with his concert and concert tours. It was only my

grandfather who taught me music until I was 11 year old. Later, my father started teaching me. There after we shared a deeper guru-shishya relationship. He was a great teacher and never left an opportunity to teach his students. Even from the stage, when he was playing a concert, he used to draw my attention with cues to notice the nuances. He discussed about those concerts at home. This honed my receptivity, alertness towards music.

Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi: My childhood was a bit different from Anna's childhood. I started learning vocal at the age of 5, from my grandfather. Slowly my father initiated me into violin. Unlike Anna, I never had the pressure to play with my father on the stage. There was already Anna who was getting ready to play with my father after my aunt stopped playing with him. But my father was a disciplinarian. There was no compromise when it comes to teaching and expectations from his students. So, we saw a Guru than a father in him, though we had several light



moment like going to the beach. But with all the respect and reverence, we saw a Guru in him more than a father.

He never taught me exclusively. I learnt with other students of my father. He was such a Guru who didn't compromise at giving knowledge to his students. Infact when I was 14, I gave my Arangetram with another student of my father, Akhila Natarajan. Only after Anna got busy with his school and public exams, I started playing with my father in concerts.

Those days, family environment was much different from today's. Our children get away with their choices. But, we were just following our parents and elders.

*Compositions of Padma Bhushan Lalgudi Jayaraman are one of the big assets of Karnatak music. You also have made your mark with your prolific compositions for dance and various ensembles. Can you share your composing experience?*

GJR Krishnan: Being with our Guru when he was composing was an experience by itself. He interpreted every small aspect musically. I feel fortunate to have experienced those moments. He showed his students the path of imaginative perspective towards every small thing that goes unnoticed in daily life. He expressed every emotion in music. Composing for dance was enriched by this perspective of his. I had seen him getting immersed into the ocean of music. There were many instances where he had woken up in the middle of the night and had composed. Later, he used to look at his own composition as an outsider. Dancers used to say that it was very easy for them to choreograph for his compositions, since half of the choreography would have been done by his music itself.

We have composed music for some documentaries, dance dramas and orchestras. We were fortunate that we could present few of our compositions in front of our father. A pat on the back or even a smile from our Guru was a great blessing for us.

Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi: I always thought that how our father brought everything into his composi-

tion. Pulse of a Raga, beautiful lyrics, enhancement of raga bhava to match the lyrics, and subtlety in a complex math. He treated his compositions as his own child and brought the best possible out of it. It was a great blessing to have been with him, when he was composing.

I had got an opportunity to play my composition in front of my father. I was fortunate to get his appreciation. As Anna said, we have been involved in composing for documentaries, dance dramas and orchestras.

*What is your opinion about the current trend in Karnatak music?*

Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi: I have two important points to mention. Firstly, during my childhood days, artists could not connect with rasikas, out of a concert platform. They mingled only with a few closely connected people. There was not many opportunities for interactions and discussions between artists and rasikas. But today because of the media and internet, artists have opportunity to connect with connoisseurs and rasikas. Artist can establish a rapport with audience and share their views. When GNB sir acted in a movie, it was a big cultural shock to the community. But today we see everyone doing something other than performing.

Secondly, in those days, though most of the audience who came to the concert knew the technical aspects like, Tishra or Chatushra tishram and so on, they came as rasikas to enjoy the concert. But today, even a small kid who comes to a concert would wait for something complicated and technical to be showcased. A trend is getting set where most of the younger generation wants to showcase their capability. Again it is just an observation and not an opinion.

Those days artists had to struggle for a long time to establish themselves. Today's generation is very talented and they have been blessed with good number of opportunities. We are seeing a lot of young talents coming up in the field, which is a very good development.

GJR Krishnan: Like any other field, Karnatak music is not immune to the influence of globali-



sation. Music field is also ruled by the world of internet today. A concert happening in T-Nagar, Chennai will be available live world wide. Hence, the artist must have a wider repertoire, as well as an artist is expected to do something different in every concert.

*“Lalgudi Bani”, is one of the foremost Banis of Karnatak music. How does it feel to be the progenitors of this great Bani?*

GJR Krishnan: It is a feeling of pride and blessings. At the same time, it is a responsibility. We look forward to pass this Bani to the artists of next generation. I believe that a Bani can grow only by being exercised by the many generations to come.

Lalgudi bani is formed by a deep intellectual process, several years of sadhana, experience and experiments. It is an eclectic combination

of aesthetic and intellectual nuances. It attracts the layman as well as the well learned artist.

Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi: We recently did a program called “Samarpanam” during December 2014. All the senior and junior students of this bani come together to celebrate the glory of this bani and pay homage to the Legend Sri Lalgudi G Jayaraman. We experienced the feeling of being one family and we want to do this every year.

We have been teaching to some hand picked students. We look forward to carry this bani without any compromise along with our students. This bani does not just embrace the aesthetics of music, it is a confluence of divinity and value imbibed lifestyle!

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*On one hand, there is an onus to kindle the interest of the younger generation towards classical art forms. On the other hand, many young artists from all over the country, especially from small villages and towns, who in spite of the interest in art are finding it difficult to enter and pursue the performing art forms. I understand that there are many entry barriers, which they are faced with. I think I am in the right forum today and so I urge all the artists present and the organisers to encourage the young artists and get them early recognition, so that they can enter into the rich art culture of our country which indeed needs nourishment in the form of young performers. One point you have to consider is to how to make a sizable audience for young upcoming artists and encourage them. Such activities will be in tune with the ideals of Shri RK Srikantan, who was a great motivator of students.*

**APJ Abdul Kalam, at the 95th Birth Anniversary of Shri. RK Srikantan**



# Spring Music Festival 2015

CK Chikkanna

I am not aware of any other institution in this country rendering yeoman and uninterrupted service for the cause of music successfully for six decades. I was amazed to hear that the family of its founder, the late Vedanta Iyengar has sold their own house in Bangalore's prime locality and deposited the sale proceeds to run the festivals and institution. Mind you, admission to the concert is free and the family do not see anything in return to their service.

SRLKM periodically arranges workshop/learning sessions from top artists/scholars on Pallavis, rare composition etc. Its Quarterly journal "Lalitha Kala Tarangini" is useful to students and rasikas which contains writings/articles/profiles/interviews/discussions, concert reviews etc. It is printed beautifully using art paper and distributed free of cost to readers.

**Dr. Bombay Jayashree Ramnath, HN Bhaskar, Delhi Sairam, Giridhar Udupa**

Dr. Bombay Jayashree Ramnath in her inaugural concert at Spring festival proved that she is a crowd puller as the auditorium was overflowing with people sitting in the corridors and on the dais. Such a peaked house could be only seen during the concerts of maestros like MS Subbulakshmi, KJ Jesudas, Mandolin Srinivasan, Parveen Sultana etc.

Recognition and honours should be bestowed on musicians in the peak of their career which stimulates them to reach greater heights. In this regard, I admire and congratulate Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira in conferring its annual "Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena" award with a cash of Rs. one Lakh and the honours she received. Dr. Bombay Jayashree Ramnath received the coveted award from the hands of HH Yedugiri Yethiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar, presided over and felicitated by Mrs. Lakshmi Chandra Shekar, distinguished theatre personality.

After starting her concert with "Vatapi" in Hamsadwani, Shyama Sastri's gem O Jagadamba followed with the team trying to hit the top gear. She exhibited lot of soukhyam in the portrayal of Malaya Marutham ragam that was followed by Purandaradasa's popular "Smarane Onde Salade". The atana kriti "Sakala Graha bala" was a quick kriti before the main item "Sri Sankaracharyam" in Sankarabaranam received a spacious treatment.

HN Bhaskar on violin was soft and melodious in his responses. Delhi Sairam supported well but one thought he could have played mellowed at times. Giridhar Udupa on Ghatam successfully responded to the Mridangam Challenge.

**Chitraveena Ravikiran, Ranjani Ramakrishnan, Patri Satishkumar, BS Arun Kumar**

Chitraveena Ravikiran's concert was marked by its usual high competence/performance. He started the second days proceedings with the Vasantha Varna "Ninnukori". Shudha Bangala song of Thyagaraja "Rama Bhakti Samrajya" was embellished with pleasing sangatis.

Simmendra Madhyamam received an elaborate treatment for "Rama Rama Guna Seema". Bhairavi was chosen for Raga-Thana-Pallavi elaboration. Pallavi followed ragamalika Thanam in raga Gowla, Suddha Saveri and Vijayashri.

Violinist Ranjani Ramakrishnan is a new face to Bangaloreans. Her Raga essays, neraval and Kalpana swarams were note worthy. Patri Satish Kumar and Arun Kumar provided pleasing percussion support on mridangam and Rhythm pads respectively. It was an enjoyable concert.

**Sanjay Subramanyam, Mysore Nagaraj, KU Jayachandra Rao, B Rajashekar**

Sanjay Subramanyam reminds me of the Late GN Balasubramanyam for his pleasing concert technique and presentation. The composition "Needi Chakra" in Kannada of Muthuswamy

Dikshitar was widely appreciated by the audience.

Forth Melakartha raga Vanaspathi received good treatment. "Vanadurge Vanaspathi" of Muthaiah Bhagavathar was a welcome change from the routine kritis and was refreshing. Sanjay's Thodi raga was well received followed by Thyagaraja's "Koluva Maragata".

The Raga-Thana-Pallavi was set to Raga Kedaragowla. Mysore Nagaraj displayed his virtuosity as a top ranking accompanist on violin. He was a perfect ally to Sanjay. KU Jayachandra Rao on Mridangam and Rajashekar on the Morching supported Sanjay well.

#### **TM Krishna, Dr. Hemalatha, Arun Prakash, G Guruprasanna**

Starting the concert 20 min late, TM Krishna packed few surprises. When the curtains of the dais opened, Dr. Hemalatha the violinist was seated to the right of Krishna like in a jugalbandhi. Her place was occupied by the Kanjeera player Guru Prasanna.

Democracy in music is dangerous. We have to respect the age old tradition, customs and concert format our elderly musicians have bequeathed to us. Likewise will Mr. TM Krishna interchange his seat either with the violinist or the Mridangist? Will he provide vocal accompaniment to instrumentalists in the near future? Those questions cropped up in my mind as the concert progressed.

The opening kriti in Begade "Thyagarajaya Namaste" composed by Muthuswamy Dikshitar set the concert on a lively and entertaining manner. His abundant manodharma and virtuosity fully blossomed in the spring festival. Each and every gem he presented was authoritative in his unique bhani. His mastery in raga essays with rich bhava captivated the packed hall.

Shayma Sastry's composition "Kanakasaila" in Punnagavarali was highly refreshing. Raga Yaman came for a special treatment followed by brief Tanam. Surprisingly he choose Dharmapuri Subbarayar's Javali "Neepai Marulu" in the middle of the concert.

Resting a while, he asked the violinist to play the raga "Sama" followed by kriti "Varuvaro Varam Taruvaro" composed by Gopalakrishna Bharati. His exploration of Atana and Kapi were the highlight of the concert.

He portrayed Kapi raga in all its splendour and each and every sangathis/sanchara came out beautifully with both the vocalist and violinist doing full justice.

Sriranjani masterpiece of Thyagaraja "Marubalka" always stimulates the performers with abundant scope for singing beautiful sangathis came around the fag end of the concert and Krishna's rendition received a thunderous applause.

Violinist Hemalatha followed Krishna like a shadow while Arun Prakash on the Mridangam and Guruprasanna on the Kanjira shared the honours with Krishna.

#### **Abhishek Raghuram, Charulatha Ramanujam, Anantha R Krishnan, G Guruprasanna**

Starting with the "Sahana" varna "Karunimpa" Abhishek established an instant rapport with the audience. He displayed his vast manodharma in the scholarly expansion of Hari Kamboji. The audience almost forgot themselves as they were swept away in the raga deluge. "Enthara Neetara" was the kriti presented in which Thyagaraja says "whatever may come and whatever may go from me, I will never allow myself separated from you".

The main item of the day was the spacious exploration of the powerful prathi madhyama mela Kalyani which lasted for 20 min and the singer painted the majestic contour of Kalyani in all its glory. Shyama Sastri's composition "Talli Ninnunara" was heard with pin drop silence and it reverberated in the hall. What a gifted artist Abhishek is! Kudus to him! In between "Aparadamulanorva" in "Rasali" (a derivative of forth mela Vanaspathi was refreshing).

It is tough and challenging task to the violinist to accompany Abhishek without disturbing his imaginative exploration of ragas and kalpana swaras. Charulatha Ramanujam successfully met



the expectations of Abhishek and provided an excellent account of herself on the violin. His cousin Anantha R Krishnan on the Mridangam and Guruprasanna on the Kanjira provided adequate support. Their tani avarthanam in Mishra Chapu was highly enjoyable.

**Dr. Manjunath and Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh, Arjun Kumar, Anantha R Krishnan**

Starting the deliberations with a varna in Kalyani, both Manjunath and Jayanthi put in their best efforts to make their concert on an entertaining one but succeeded in patches. They brought out the rich grandeur of Karaharapriya in their raga exposition for Thyagaraja's "Rama nee samanamevaru". The "Nalinakanti" kriti of Thyagaraja "Manavyalakinchara" was heard after a long time in several concerts I attended.

The high spot of the duet was the selection of raga "Nasikabushini" the seventieth mela for detailed exploration. Jayanthi's tanam was enjoyable.

Arjun Kumar on Mridangam and Ananthakrishnan on the Tabla were adequate.

**Ranjani-Gayatri, HN Bhaskar, Delhi S Sairam, GS Ramanujam**

Super stars of Karnatak music Ranjani and Gayatri's vocal duet on the final day of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary was a fitting finale to the weeklong musical festival.

The musical recipe that they dished out was very well relished and will live long in the memory of the large audience for long.

Opening their duet with the "Kanada" varna "nera nammiti", the sisters established an in-

stantaneous rapport with the audience. Good patanthara, perfect understanding, variation/ blending in their voice, judicious selection of kritis and perfect presentation, excellent melody were the high point of the concert. No doubt they are so immensely popular and successful in their musical journey.

Todi alapana by Ranjani was pleasing followed by kriti "Rajurvedala juta murare". "Brindavana Saranga" kriti of Dikshitar "Soundararajam Ashraye" brought out the rich beauty of the lyrics and the raga bhava. Poorvi Kalyani by Gayathri was the high point of the concert. She traversed freely in all the three octaves and brought out the quintessence of with at most perfection.

As a tribute to the Mysore Vasudevacharya on the occasion of his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, the duo presented his song "Marachiteve" in raga "Purvi Kalyani" and rounded off with well measured neraval and kalpana swaras.

Vagadeeshwari the 34<sup>th</sup> mela raga was chosen for the spacious elaboration. Tanam was in line with the tradition. The pallavi was set to tala "Trimuki" (Nadai bheda done only on Sashbda kriyas. The nishadha kriyas were chatusra gati and the shashabda kriyas were Tisra gati). The trikalam was perfect and they rounded off the concert with kalpana swaram and korvai. Violinist HN Bhaskar was a perfect match and respond equally impressively in his solo turns. Mridangist Delhi Sairam was soft during the vocal session but quite loud during tani avarthanam while GS Ramanujam was soft and melodious on the Ghatam.



# Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma-A Man of music

Kanjari Vidwan and Disciple of Shivu Sir, G Guruprasanna

'Ganakalasri' 'Layakala Prathibhamani' Vidwan Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma (Shivu), as we all know, is a multifaceted musical genius. Born into a great musical lineage, Sri Shivu started accompanying senior artistes at the age of twelve. He has come a long way since this in his musical journey to be known today as the one of the most eminent percussionists of our country. There have been many articles written and published about Sri Shivu in the media. This candid write up throws light on some of the lesser known facets about him.

**Q:** Even though your father was an established violinist, what made you to become a percussionist? Please tell us about your learning experience as a student.

**Shivu Sir:** Ever since my memory goes back, I have been playing the Mridangam. My house was always filled with music. My father, Sri Anoor S Ramakrishna, being a great Vidwan himself always had his classes going on and my brother, Sri Anoor Dattatreya Sharma used to play Mridangam. So, I was always in a musical atmosphere.

Sri R.A. Rajagopal had joined at Ayyanar College of Music to teach Mridangam. It was then, that my father made me join under his tutelage. My first class with Sri Rajagopal Sir was on Feb 14<sup>th</sup>, 1978. For 1 year, I had definite and regular classes, after which it continued for 2 more years.

R.A. Rajagopal Sir was a very good teacher. He comes from the lineage of Sri TAS Mani Sir and

**Shivu Sir turned 50 Sunday, March 29. G Guruprasanna talks to him to presents this two part story on behalf of SRLKM.**

Ayyamani Iyer Sir, who are also great teachers. RAR Sir taught from very basics and he taught in such an easy-to-understand way! Whichever Tala he handled, he used simple maths to teach. He gave plenty of tips on how to present neatly. Both calculations and sarvalaghu were equally important in what he taught - Sarvalaghu for kritis and mathematics for Thani.

**Q:** How did you develop flair to play so many different instruments? Have you formally learnt any or all of those that we see you playing on stage?

**Shivu Sir:** Mridangam is the only instrument I really learnt in a class that too after my father told me firmly. I have always wanted to learn to play other instruments. I have learnt most other instruments by listening to radio.

In 1980-81, I wanted to learn Tabla. I would keep a Khanjira between the thighs and Mridangam beside to simulate a Tabla and practice. Later on, I got a Tabla on my own. As far as Thavil is concerned, people would say that learning Thavil would change the way of playing Mridangam. So I developed different fingering and realised that it was only a mindset. Both can be





*Shivu Sir is a master of several instruments and most of them being self learnt*

learnt without disturbing either.

It is only out of my own interest that I started playing other traditional and folk instruments, for example, Pakhawaj, Dholki, Dholak, some instruments with sticks, Chende, Shuddha Madhalam. Also, due to experience in the dance field, I got to try some more different instruments. This also increased my interest in trying out further experiments.

**Q:** As a guru have you seen any changes in the way students take to learning over the years?

**Shivu Sir:** As it is, I have not seen changes over generations of students in learning, in these 30 years of teaching. Initially I used to get disturbed if a student cannot understand lessons, say Tha Dhi Mi Tha....and would wonder how to make him learn. But now, probably because of my experience, I find it easier or at least I am able to find a way to teach each particular student in a manner he would grasp. Depending on what each student's needs are, I experiment in teaching. The Technique of teaching is quite self-evolved for me. With every student, I learn how to make them learn. I strongly feel music teachers play a very critical role in inculcating tradition and values in students. To motivate them and further their interest, teachers should devise programs and design new methods and lessons, so that they don't drift away.

**Q:** How do you view the future of pure and traditional kutchcheris in Karnatak music?

**Shivu Sir:** Whatever happens, we sing Endharo the same way, Varna-s in the same way, Pavamana (Mangala) has remained the same, Jagadoddharana is rendered in the same way. This is the proof that there is and can be NO effect of other things on classical music. Many people feel upset today and feel there is a downward trend. I think there is no need to think negatively. There are so many people who learn just by listening. There are bound to be changes in all genres. People want change - Sometimes the way things were being sung earlier, may not fit into today. Also, People also expect different aspects in different atmospheres. So, adapting to today's requirements is fine provided we are within traditional boundaries. As long as simplicity and aesthetics in rendering kritis and sowkhya in manodharma are maintained, they go far beyond any requirement!

**Q:** How has your family played a critical role in supporting your career?

**Shivu Sir:** Music was in the family always. My Father was a great inspiration, as was my elder brother too. So I was always surrounded by music and musicians. My Wife is also very supportive to my career, my concert schedules, travels, and everything. By God's grace, my sons have also taken into music. That way, Family for me, has been a great blessing.



# Vishesha Utsava

Shri. GV Krishnaprasad was honoured with “Vishesha Kala Poshaka” by the Vishesha Fine Arts on 15 February, 2015.

The award was presented as a mark of his sincere, selfless and continued service in the area of fine arts for several decades.



*From L to R - Vidushi Vani Satish, ST Ramesh, Retd. DGP, Bangalore, Ganakalabushana RK Padmanabha, GV Krishnaprasad, Vid. KU Jayachandra Rao, Vid. Mysore Nagaraj, Vid. Mysore Satish*

# Karnataka Fine Arts Council

## National Youth Music Festival Schedule

(Concerts at Bangalore Gayana Samaja daily at 5 pm)

5.00 pm to 6.30 pm	6.45 pm to 8.15 pm
 <p><b>Sunday, 24 May, 2015</b> Madhu Kashyap-Vocal Atchyuta Rao-Violin Vinodh Shyam - Mridangam</p>	 <p>Brinda Manickvachakam-Vocal Chidambaram Badrinath-Violin L Subramanyam-Mridangam</p>
 <p><b>Monday, 25 May, 2015</b> Mahati SK-Vocal Gokul-Violin Charudutt-Mridangam</p>	 <p>Sunil Gargeyan-Vocal Dilip KJ-Violin Akshay Ram-Mridangam</p>
 <p><b>Tuesday, 26 May, 2015</b> Anirudh Venkatesh-Vocal Shreya Devnath-Violin Akshay Anand-Mridangam</p>	 <p>Tejas Mallela-Violin Solo Adamyam-Mridangam Sunaad Anoor-Kanjari</p>
 <p><b>Wednesday, 27 May, 2015</b> Vani Ramamurthi-Vocal Sriram Sridhar-Violin Rohit Prasad-Mridangam</p>	 <p>Jayanth JA-Flute M Vijay-Violin Tanjore K Praveenkumar-Mridangam</p>
 <p><b>Thursday, 28 May, 2015</b> Thanmayee Krishnamurthy-Vocal Mysore Sangeetha-Violin Anirudh Bhat-Mridangam</p>	 <p>Vasudha Ravi-Vocal Shradha Ravindran-Violin KH Vineet-Mridangam</p>
 <p><b>Friday, 29 May, 2015</b> Ananya Ashok-Vocal Sandeep Ramachandran-Violin Deepika Srinivasan-Mridangam</p>	 <p>Narayana Sharma-Violin Solo Chetan Murthy-Mridangam Chidananda-Morching</p>
 <p><b>Saturday, 30 May, 2015</b> Anahita and Apoorva-Vocal MP Aditya-Violin BS Prashanth-Mridangam</p>	 <p>Vignesh Ishwar-Vocal Sudha RS Iyer-Violin Madurai B Sundar-Mridangam</p>