

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (R)

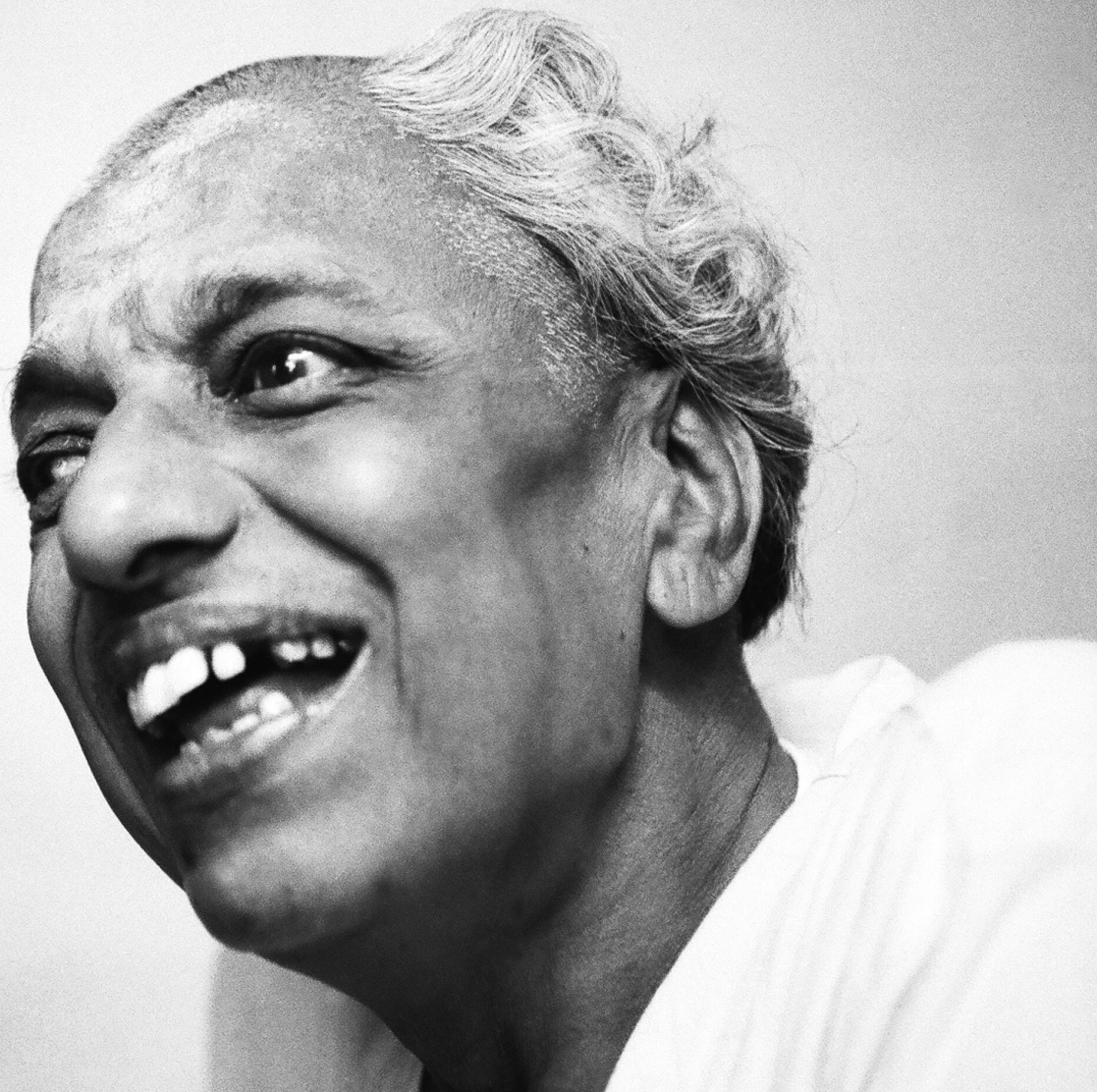
(Distinguished Service to Carnatic Music since 1955)

Lalitha Kala Tarangini

Quarterly Music Magazine

Volume 2017, Issue 4

Dec 2017



Prof. R Visweswaran Honoured

The title “Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena” was presented to veteran Veena virtuoso of Mysore Prof. R Visweswaran in the divine presence of “H H Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar” on 25th October, 2017.

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 62 years ago.



Prof. R Visweswaran receiving the 'Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena award'

Dec 2017

Please accept my sincere apologies for missing the September 2017 edition. It was completely unavoidable, but I am glad the December issue contains some very interesting content that you will really love.

We dedicate this special issue to the one of the greatest composer and vocalist Manjappa Devesa Bhagavathar Ramanathan, alias MD Ramanathan (MDR) who lived during the golden era of Karnatak music.

MDR was an epitome of tradition and his superiority over Sampradaya matched his master Tiger Varadachariar and he was inspired by none other than Patnam Subramania Iyer. MDR's style of singing has utmost significance, especially today considering some of our current day musicians are so much motivated by speed and fast paced swaras. He had one of the richest voices and adopted vilambakala speed and gave importance to the silence in music that enabled rasikas to experience the divinity.

His Giripai (Sahana), Janani Ninnu Vina (Ritigowla), O Jagadamba (Ananda Bairavi), Varugalamo Ayyah (Maanji), Sri Thyagaraja Gurumasraye (Kedaram) and many more kritis are unparalleled and something that will always be special to rasikas for many more generations.

He was bestowed with 'Padma Shri' in 1974, followed by Sangeet Natak Akademi Award 1975. It is said in the music circle that he was considered for Sangita Kalanidhi by The Music Academy but it did not materialise in the end. The prestigious title unfortunately is conspicuous of not associating itself with some of the outstanding musicians that our music has ever produced. He died on April 27, 1984

C Saroja and C Lalitha are popularly called Bombay Sisters as they hailed from Bombay. They shifted to Chennai based on advices from great musicians who were of the

opinion that a musical career for them will be successful only if they shift to Madras. Initially they started learning from Musiri Subramanya Iyer and later-on his prime disciple TK Govinda Rao took on the Musiri Subramanya Iyer's role and taught them. We carry a very detailed story on Bombay Sisters that is a must read.

Dr. TS Satyavathi will be receiving the prestigious Musicologist award from The Music Academy, Madras during the sadas on 01 Jan 2018. We carry an interview by Deepa Ganesh our senior associate.

As a mark of tribute to our chief founders Karnataka Kalashree GV Ranganayakamma, Vid. GV Neela and Dr. GV Vijayalakshmi, we presented 'Lalitha Kala Suma' award that carried a purse of Rs. 10,000 and a citation to 68 musicians in Bangalore and 32 musicians in Mysore. The gesture was truly appreciated by the music community and probably a first ever for any institute.

This is the last edition of Lalitha Kala Tarangini for the year 2017 and I hope you enjoyed all the editions. Here is wishing you all a very happy new year for 2018. May the best of the best come your way in this new year.

Anand S

Contributors - Brindha Manichavasakan, S Sivaramakrishnan, CP Chikkanna, Shri. Varadadasa, Deepa Ganesh, Rajashree Yogananda, Rajani Arjun Shankar, Vid. Sukanya Ramgopal

Photo Courtesy - Paniraj, The Hindu archives, Personal collections of Dr. TS Sathyavathi, Personal collection Shri. K Srikantiah (home called Parvati), The Music Academy, Madras archives, Personnel collections of Shri. Balaji son of MDR, Personal collection of Vid. Sukanya Ramgopal.

Visit us online @ www.srlkmandira.org and share your feedback @ lkt_srlkm@yahoo.com

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.

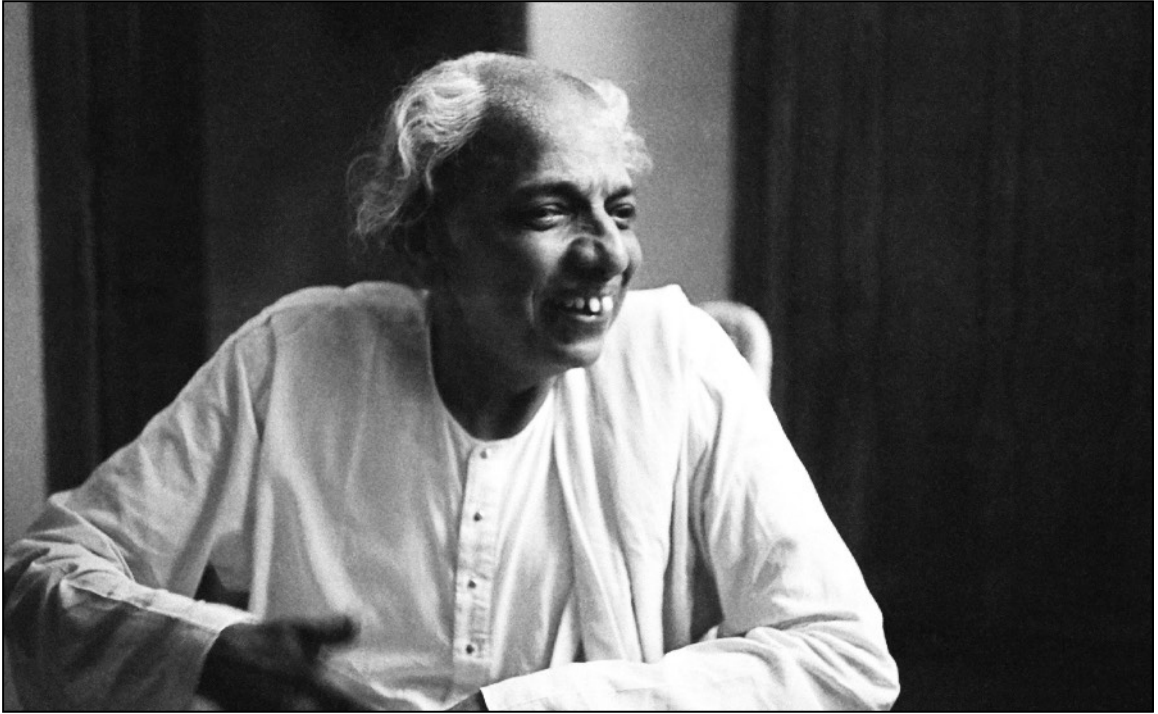
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Magazine Committee

Editor - Anand S

Senior Associates: Neela Ramgopal, KS Kalidas, Dr. Mysore M Manjunath, Rajashree Yogananda, Deepa Ganesh and Sudha Prakash.

Printed and published by GV Krishna Prasad on behalf of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, CA No. 28, 9th Main Road, Near Banashankari II Stage Post office, Banashankari II Stage, Bangalore 560070, Karnataka, India.



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Lalitha Kala Tarangini - Inbox

To the Editor,

Sir,

The June issue of the magazine Lalitha Kala Tarangini was excellent with many weighty articles on Sri HV Krishnamurthy, Radha Jayalakshmi, MS Sheela, GV Neela Madam etc. printed in high quality paper. The article written by R Sachidananda on MS Sheela was quite exhaustive presented in his unique absorbing style. It was a great pleasure reading this article. Thanks to you for publishing an exhaustive article on the popular duo Radha Jayalakshmi penned by Shri CP Chickanna. This article

contains much more information than what was published earlier in Sruti magazine by the same author.

I have been hearing the live concerts and records of Radha Jayalakshmi from Radio Ceylon and AIR right from my childhood. Radio Ceylon of the pre war days used to broadcast Carnatic music between 7AM and 7.30 AM. Radha Jayalakshmi's records had its place frequently. Their Kadir kama Kandan (Kambodi- Papanasam Sivan), Chakkaniraja, Sidhivinayakam, Sree Krishnam bhaja manasa, Thamadamen Sami etc. were very frequently played. 1960s-80s saw the release of lot of their LPs –

which sold like hot cakes. All their records were nicely packaged – with a judicious combination of familiar and rare songs. In the song Ninnuvina namadendu they used to sing all the sangathis which was popularised by Flute wizard Mali in a breathtaking manner which is a challenge for any vocalist. Their Purandaradasa Kritis LP record was a rage among Kannada speaking people for their immaculate rendition of ugabogas and devaranamas in a soulful manner. They were ardent Sai devotees and they had released one LP of Sai Bhajans tuned by Vijayaraghava Rao. Their commercial releases continued till 1990s.

They had their slots in all music festivals, Radio Sangeetha Sammelans, National Programmes and thematic programmes conceived by AIR when the Carnatic music field was dominated by the galaxy of male jambavans and the female trinity of Carnatic music. They were regular fixtures in the Rama Navami concerts of Rama Seva Mandali for decades. I have heard them in Thiruvananthapuram, Bangalore and Chennai. One of the earliest concert that is still in my memory was in seventies in Tagore Theatre, Thiruvananthapuram for the AIR conducted Swati Tirunal Festival- a concert of all Swati Tirunal Kritis. That was the time when Swati Tirunal compositions had not received much exposure outside Kerala. I distinctly remember an elaborate Bhavapriya (Mamavasritha) and Bhairavi (Palayadeva deva) - both rare songs- in that concert. To our surprise, they also sang verses from Utsavaprabandham and Panchasayaka janakan in Nee-lambari in faultless Malayalam - a surprise for us in those days.

In Nineties I heard many memorable concerts in Bangalore and Chennai. Their alapanas had abundant manodharmam, silky voice and effortless singing with gusto traversing the octaves. Their neraval and swaraprastharams had immense coordination and unflinching imagination. Their patantharam is most authentic and the cascade of sangathis in songs like Marubalga, Dariini telusukonti are captivating. Their style of singing songs like Rama nee samana, O Rangasayee etc in the lower register by Radha and in the upper register by Jayalakshmi had immense appeal. I remember reading a review by Subbudu in his characteristic style - where he rated Jayalakshmi's voice much superior to that of Parveen Sultana. After a concert in Mysore in early Sixties, veteran violin Vidwan Mysore Chowdiah was full of appreciation for their vidwath, zeal, verve and gusto and he hailed them as GNB in sarees.

They had a very vast repertoire of compositions belonging to a wide variety of composers. They popularised the kritis of their Guru GNB in all the concerts. GNB's son the late G.B.Doraiswamy had told me once that GNB



Our Upcoming Programmes in 2018

(See back cover page for Sankranti and Spring festival concert schedule)

1st March Sunday 5.30 p.m. SRLKM Auditorium

A Dilip Simha and AK Jagadish (Vocal duet), Mathur R. Srinidhi (Violin), B.S. Prashanth (Mridanga), Anil Parashara (Khanjira)

8th April Sunday 5.30 p.m. SRLKM Auditorium

Dr. R Geetha Bhat (Veena), B Dhruvaraj (Mridanga), Dayananda Mohite (Ghata),

Founders Day

13th May, 5.30 pm, Bangalore Gayana Samaja
Annual founders day of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira.

On its founders day, SRLKM recognises young budding artistes and honours them with "Raaga Laya Prabha Award" that carry a purse of 25,000 Rs. and a citation. This award is to commemorate the memory of the Founder-Director, Karnataka Kalashree GV Ranganayakamma, GV Neela and her Sister, Founder-patron and Veena artiste Dr. GVVijayalakshmi.

There will be a concert of:

Abhishek Raghuram (Vocal)
Vittal Rangan (Violin)
NC Bharadwaj (Mridangam)
G Guruprasanna (Khanjira)

2017 Awardees

BK Raghu (Violin)
Kum. Aditi B Prahlad (Vocal)
Akshay Anand (Mridangam)

considered the renditions of his compositions by Radha Jayalakshmi as most authentic and he collected from me all the songs of GNB sung by the sisters. They had made their indelible stamp in many songs like Ardhana-reeswaram (Kumudakriya), Sogasuga mridanga thalamu, Nee mayayolago (Yadukulakambodi - Kanakadasa), Aravindalaye thaye (Kedaragowla-Purandaradasar), Koovi azhaikkakoodatha (Sindubhairavi-Papanasam Sivan) etc. Their ragamalika slokams were much appreciated by the audience.

In fact, Radha began losing her voice in the late eighties, but Jayalakshmi's voice was sweet and pliable till the last concert. Music Academy, Madras bestowed TTK Award on them in 2000 - a poor compensation for not awarding Sangeetha Kalanidhi - and at that time, they presented a concert of exclusive GNB Kritis in the Music Academy which attracted rave reviews.

Many of the film songs sung by Jayalakshmi – mostly in carnatic ragas- became very popular. In the later years, they sang in the films Konjum salangai, Motor Sundaram Pillai, Adi Parasakthi, Amman arul etc. In the Malayalam film Kumarasambhavam in the early Seventies, a marathon song in Khamas- Maya natana viharini which included an array of swaras in Khamas and also ragamalika swaras was sung by Jayalakshmi and P.Leela. Music direction by G Devarajan. The only film song sung by the duo together is Thiruchenduril por purinthu in the film Deivam - This is a very melodious song in Kavadihindu form - music scored by Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan. In their regular concerts, rasikas eagerly requested for these songs.

With the advent of many young voices in 2000s, their concert opportunities reduced. But discerning music rasikas still adore their music. Fortunately, plenty of recordings of their concerts are in circulation. Radha Jayalakshmi will live through the innumerable concert recordings available with music lovers.

There is a photograph published in page 22 of the article. The Mridangam Artiste is Palghat Krishnamani and not Palghat Mani Iyer as given therein. Palghat Mani Iyer never played for the duo.

Wishing all the best.
C Ramakrishnan

Sir,

June issue is although belated, it is commendable going by the contents and tributes/homage to the founder the Late. Neela. I wish the magazine is time bound so that the editorial team can chalk out the next issue more interesting and enlightening to the readers.

Your profile of MS Shela has come out very well. I have seen the transition of M.Susheela into M.S.Sheela which is phenomenal. She gave notice of her immense talent as a teen aged girl when she sang Purandaradasa's song in Kambodhi raga "Tunga Teerada Mane Nammadu" that won her first prize (tambura) in the music competition under the aegis of Karnataka Ganakala Parishath's first ever music conference presided over by Late. BS Raja Iyengar in the year 1970. Sheela is blessed with Midas touch. She excelled in multiple spheres as a musician, a dancer, a bank employee, a film actress in "Abachurina Post Office" directed by veteran N Lakshmi Narayan, decorated with "A" top grade by All India Radio in both classical and light classical music at a very young age and her achievements speak for themselves. Her initials M.S are synonymous with the Doyenne Subbulakshmi and violin virtuoso Gopalakrishnan and we wish her more and more success and our prayers to the Almighty to guide Sheela to carry forward her rich legacy to the next generation.

I do not have words to describe the precise planning, the amount of labour and the orderly manner in felicitating 68 musicians at huge expenditure with a cash award to each recipient with love to celebrate the 68 birth day of HH Sri Yedugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar in the sprawling over flowing Bangalore Gayana Samaja hall. When the awards are being conferred under political sycophancy / influence after applying for it in the present days, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira has carved a niche for itself in organising this mega event purely on seniority and merit basis which deserve emulation by other organisations.

Lastly, the concluding programme, a video presentation of His Holiness's various aims and objectives commemorating the 1000th year celebrations of Sri Ramanujar was a fitting finale to the function

Regards,
CP Chikkanna

Addendum

On Page 22 of June 17 edition, please read the mridangam accompaniment to Radha and Jayalakshmi as Palghat Krishnamani and not Palghat Mani Iyer. The error is regretted.

Bombay Sisters - Symbol of devotion and sincerity

Brindha Manichavasakan

As I interviewed the Bombay Sisters, I realised how every word they spoke showed their humility and Guru bhakti. All they could talk about was how they had been blessed – with great Guru-s, supportive families, and wonderful opportunities.

The Bombay Sisters are Saroja and Lalitha, Saroja being the elder sister. As a family they were five sisters, two brothers, who grew up in Bombay. Their elder sister and cousin sister were learning from Sri Krishna Bhagavata. Lalitha mami said, “Saroja akka showed great enthusiasm and would sit and sing with them as a young six year old. I was not very involved back then, but it was Saroja akka who sparked the

interest in me, inspired me to learn this great art.”

Their father, Sri Chidambara Iyer was a great rasika, and was very passionate about music. He would make it a point to take them to all the concerts that took place in Bombay, in the two sabha-s functioning there at that time; Shan-mukhananda Sabha and Sangeetha Sabha. “Akka and I used to often listen to concerts of several great artists when they performed in Bombay including Madurai Mani Iyer, GNB, Pattammal, MLV, MS, Alathur Brothers and so on. Drawing inspiration from the Radha - Jayalakshmi duo, she used to tell me that we should sing like them some day.” Lalitha mami added. “Lalitha wanted to become an English Professor.” Saroja





Performing at Parvathi, Mysore with Mahadevappa, PS Lakshminarayan (Mridangam) and MA Krishnamurthy (Ghata) (Photo courtesy : "A Home called Parvathi" Shri. K Srikantiah)

mami intersected, as they broke into a fit of laughter. "She would shy away from singing back then because her voice was not sweet. During all the time we had to ourselves - (we never took the tram or any vehicle so that we could spend more time with each other) while walking to Hindi class, teacher training class, violin class, music class, I insisted and told her how she should sing. We both were young, with an age difference of only one and a half years, but she surprisingly listened to me!" Saroja mami said as they both smiled at each other. The sisters initially learnt from their cousin sister Lalitha, and then from Sri H.A.S. Mani in Bombay.

Many people brought up concerns regarding prospects of marriage, given that the sisters had started singing as a duo. "We were five girls and someone told our father that five girls meant too much trouble getting them settled; to which our father said – they are like pancha kanyas, nithya sarva papa vinaasanam (meaning like the five celestial girls, they will destroy everlasting sins)." Saroja mami gleamed with pride. "It was God's grace that walked us through everything, it was no one's wit or plan" she said. Their fa-

ther's zest for their musical growth helped nurture their spirit. His sheer discipline and determination inspired the sisters. Although he did not have any formal learning, he had heard decades of music and developed an undying love for the art. He did not know what the sisters practised but knew that they had to practise, do that hard work. He would wake up at 4 am and set the room for the morning practice session. Only after practice could they have breakfast or a cup of coffee!

At this point, Saroja mami received the Government of India scholarship (which later, Lalitha mami also received). The family moved to Chennai. The sisters joined the Central College of Carnatic Music where the principal then was none other than Musiri Sri Subramanya Iyer. Being a scholarship awardee, Musiri asked Saroja mami to come to his home for music lessons every day. As they were singing together, he asked Lalitha mami to join and observe the class. "kelvi gnaanam romba mukyam (Knowledge through listening is very important)" Saroja mami recalled Musiri saying. "I would come back home and teach Lalitha whatever I was taught." This was when they started performing

in Chennai, at around the age of 20. Their father was particular that marriage for the sisters should be with families that would encourage their career, and this certainly came true. The pillars of support that the sisters' families were, complemented their hard work and ensured that they were led in the path envisioned by their father and their Guru-s.

Their residence was at Apparswamy Kovil Street, Mylapore where a neighbour Sri Chandrashekar Iyer asked their father if the sisters would go and perform at the Maunaswamigal Matam in Ambattur. The father was thrilled about the opportunity, as it was a dream come true. After the concert, the Swamigal for the first time gave them the name "Bombay Sisters", blessing them with an illustrious, successful career in music.

Another interesting incident that took place at the start of their career was when they had gone for their very first AIR live recording. There was some last minute change in schedule and they were asked to sing devotional music for half an hour. "We were very upset. That was when Palghat Sundaram Iyer (Ghatam Vidvan) approached us and said – 'What is devotional? Everything we sing is devotional!' And so we sang some compositions in that program, and received good reviews from many. There was no turning back from there. AIR gave us several opportunities and memorable platforms, giving us a good exposure all over India" said Sarojamami.

About their learning experience from Musiri- "We would wait until sir called us, and class would go on without any time limit. There was no looking at the clock or counting classes. He was such a dedicated teacher, and sensitive to every musical sound." If Musiri was not there, his disciples Sri TK Govinda Rao or Sri KS Venkatraman would take class. The sisters were captivated by TKG sir's teaching and so they requested their father to arrange for classes with him, at their house. This went on to be a 'record-breaking' more than fifty splendid years of learning under the Mahavidvan TK Govinda Rao. "He was not just our Guru, he was one

Vid. KS Kalidas on Bombay Sisters

"In my many years of listening to Carnatic music, I have seen male duo singers a little more common than female duo singers. Even in general, it is a challenge for female singers, be it solo or duet, to perform and simultaneously manage family, finances and so on. Singing as duo would involve two families, making it even more challenging. After the Radha-Jayalakshmi duo who were extremely famous in their time, the next prominent, popular duo were the Bombay Sisters. Their place was uncontested for and they won the hearts of the rasika-s. They were also the darling of the recording companies. It is a historical fact that the number of discs, audio cassettes they have released is a record that I don't think can be broken any time soon. There are several thematic concepts that have been covered by them. I still remember the very first concert that I heard of theirs, which was around 50 years ago, in Srinivasa Shastri Hall, Luz. I was absolutely bowled over by their music. I have heard them for around 50 years now. In all the concerts that I have heard, I can say with confidence that never did they dilute or disturb the classicism in their music on any level, for any reason. They maintained the classical content to the maximum. They did not focus on too much of rhythmic orientation – it was an adequate, proportional amount of calculations that they indulged in.

Everything concerning their music was optimal and of high standard. The sisters were taught by great maestros such as Musiri and then extensively by TKG. TKG was a very very sincere teacher. The Bombay sisters are one among his prime disciples who came up very well. Both sisters are very friendly to their accompanying artists, they create a close rapport with the audience and never lower their standards. They are not money-minded, and have a charitable streak in them. They have helped several organisations by donating proceeds from their concerts."



With the MS Subbulakshmi Award - seen with HCL Shiv Nadar and Sangita Kalanidhi Vadavalli

with our family. He was very close to our father and they shared great respect for each other despite a huge generation gap. Once when our mother was severely ill and our father was not in town, he stayed with us throughout; running errands, taking care of us, and comforted us through such a hard time. He did not have to, but he did. Such was his deep-rooted affection and attachment towards our family. He was like our elder brother.” Saroja mami reminisced.

Classes with TKG were precious pearls of learning. They went on for countless hours and innumerable compositions were taught. So open-minded he was that even if they had to learn something he did not know, he would teach them the same after learning it himself within a couple of days; especially during the time when the sisters were working on several audio releases. “Our Gurunathar was a born genius, with the most magnificent mind and such a pure heart. He saw and imbibed the good from wherever, whoever it was”, said Saroja mami proudly. He gave boundlessly without inhibition, encouraged his students, and never cared for money. Lalgudi Jayaraman once told the sisters that they had been gifted with this Guru- “avar maniyum paakamaataar, money-

yum paakamaataar (who will neither look at time nor money)” (a play on the word mani which in Tamil means time).

“When we received Sangeetha Kalanidhi in the presence of our Guru, we felt overwhelmed. TKG sir told us that he was proud that his students were receiving the award and that we were the 4th generation to get this title. On the day of the award ceremony, he came to the stage and presented us a shawl. We were so moved. His anugraham is everything for us”, said the elated sisters.

“Once when we were singing in a temple in Salem, we were not at our enthusiastic best because we did not have many listeners there. After a while into the concert, we received a chit from a group of boys who stood across the stage, which said that they were listening to the concert intently and that they were enjoying it. It gave us so much happiness to read that message. After the concert, they met with us and told us that they were going to build a Raghavendra Swamy temple and as soon as it was ready, they wanted us to sing there. We were overjoyed. We performed there and donated the proceeds from the concert to the



Receiving the Sangita Kalanidhi award. Also seen in the picture is Shri. N Murali, President, The Music Academy.

temple. This was a very special incident for us” said the sisters.

The 80s were a glorious time when there was a phenomenal contribution by the Bombay Sisters in recordings of compositions, devotional hymns, and many more. One could not find a theme or set of compositions that were not sung by Bombay sisters. These recordings are a sure treasure for posterity. They sang in several languages, and covered a wide spectrum of composers. Sangeetha and Keerthana were among the main recording companies that came out with several albums sung by the sisters. As much as two albums per month were released by Sangeetha. The sisters would be practising through their mornings, afternoons, their train journeys, and at any spot they could find – they worked round the clock for their concerts, their tours, recordings and their classes which were all happening at the same time. Bombay Sisters have released innumerable albums to their credit - Haridasa Padagalu, Compositions of Jagannatha Vittala, Purandara Dasa, Kshetra Kirthanas, numerous thematic compositions, compositions of contemporary composers, shloka-s, Tamil albums, to name a few. They made an immense contribution in the rendering of several divine texts in various Indian lan-

guages, with crystal clear pronunciation. They also worked closely with Sri L Krishnan who tuned and orchestrated many of their recordings.

When it came to compositions of Purandara Dasa and many other composers, it was TKG’s tune they sang. “His tune and the words cannot be separated, they jointly would convey the meaning so naturally”, said Saroja mami. “We truly enjoyed this period- it was a golden period. Being busy with concerts, tours, recordings, it was music, music and more music everywhere”, she said. They toured several countries such as the US, UK, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Mexico and so on. The sisters have been accompanied in their concerts by great stalwarts from the very start. Many artists of the next generations have also accompanied them. VV Subramanyam, Guruvayur Dorai, Palakkad Sundaram, Parur Venkatarama Iyer, Dindukul Ramamuthy, Ghatam Kalyanaraman, SK Narasimhamurthi, Thanjavur Subramanyam, A Kanyakumari, R Raja Rao, N Govindarajan, Trichur Narendran, Usha Rajagopal, KV Prasad, Meera Sivaramakrishnan, Vijayaganesh MR Raghul, M Vijay, KR Ganesh, Kumbakonam Swaminathan, Ghatam H Sivaramakrishnan, Madipakkam Suresh, Madipakkam Murali and

Trichy Murali have accompanied them over the years. “We have such fond memories with all these artists as we have sung so many recordings or concerts with them. Our train travels especially are unforgettable; with so much fun and never ending sessions of music, stories and food. We would all travel as a family” said the sisters, as their faces lit up talking about their cherished memories.

When asked about practice, they said that they practise together every day, till date. “If there is a break in practice for one or two days, we feel like something is terribly wrong”, said Saroja mami as they both smiled, “Every day practice is a must. It is like breathing – it is a necessity. One birth is not enough for music.”

“Looking back, we feel how sweet a journey our life has been, one that easily could not have been smooth, but with the best wishes of our

families and Guru-s, came to be. Being two sisters who took up music as full time profession, in those days, having a father who had the confidence in us, who made critical decisions and stood by us throughout our journey, finding loving families that would not only encourage us, but also be proud of us, being graced with such amazing Guru-s, these are things one cannot easily get. We cannot say anything except that we are grateful and truly blessed.”

Their message to youngsters and upcoming musicians - “Music is eternal. There is great music today from young musicians, and they are all very intelligent also. The only thing I would like to say is that everyone needs to be aware of ego, especially with the much increased amount of opportunities available today. Giving room for the ego may be detrimental to the music. Sincerity and Devotion to music are absolutely necessary for timelessness.”

Kalavantha 2018 Schedule

Venue: Suchitra Cinema and Cultural Academy, No. 36, 9th Main, (BV Karanth Road, Near Post Office), Banashankari, II Stage, Bengaluru, 560070, Ph # 080-2671 1785

Date	Concert 1 - 4.30 pm to 6.00 pm	Concert 2 - 6.15 pm to 7.45 pm
23 January 2018	Shruthi Shankar Kumar - Vocal (Tamil Nadu) Sruti Sarathy - Violin (USA) N Sasanka Mouli - Mridanga (Andhra Pradesh)	Harish Pandav - Saxophone (Karnataka) S. Subhashree - Violin (Tamil Nadu) TR Aravind Koushik - Mridanga (Tamil Nadu)
24 January 2018	Abhishek Ravishankar - Vocal (Tamil Nadu) Vishwajith Mattur - Violin (Karnataka) R Pichai Vinith - Mridanga (Tamil Nadu)	Sweta Balasubramanian - Vocal (Tamil Nadu) Vaibhav Ramani - Violin (Karnataka) N Nagaraj - Mridanga (Kerala)
25 January 2018	Rakshita Ramesh - Veena (Karnataka) DR Chetan Murthy - Mridanga (Karnataka) Sachin H Devi Prasad - Ghatam (Karnataka)	V Subashri - Vocal (Tamil Nadu) Aniruddha Bharadwaj - Violin (Karnataka) Rakshit Sharma - Mridanga (Karnataka)
26 January 2018	S Mahadevan - Veena (Kerala) Deepikaa Sreenivasan - Mridanga (Karnataka) V Ganesh Murthy - Ghatam (Karnataka)	Varun Ganesan - Vocal (USA) M.P. Aditya - Violin (Karnataka) L Sudarsan Srinivas - Mridanga (Tamil Nadu)
27 January 2018	Sanjay Nag - Vocal (Karnataka) V Deepika - Violin (Tamil Nadu) Krishna Pawan Kumar - Mridanga (Karnataka)	Aravind Bhargav - Mandolin (Tamil Nadu) Mantha Sriramya - Violin (Andhra Pradesh) K Vishnuvardhana - Mridanga (Karnataka)

28 January 2018 5.00 pm to 6.30 pm
Vocal concert of S Saketharaman with HM Smitha on Violin and Tumkur B Ravishankar on Mridanga

6.45 pm onwards
Award Function Programme

Mandrathwani in the Mandapam

S Sivaramakrishnan



Only certain sublime experiences make meaningful landmarks in our journey of life. Being able to attend the annual music concert series at the Navaratri Mandapam, Trivandrum for about twenty years in a row (1965-84) is for sure the greatest achievement in my life. It was here that I could listen to the best of Carnatic music. And it was the music of the great MD Ramanathan that gave an ethereal experience which I would cherish forever.

The Navaratri Mandapam

Navaratri Mandapam - also known as the Saraswathi mandapam - in Trivandrum is perhaps aesthetically designed for music listening. It is situated just adjacent to the Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple in the eastern approach and facing the Padmatheertham (holy tank) in East fort area. The 'Methan Mani' (the vintage Clock tower that has virtually minuted Travancore

history over the past) can be taken as the landmark and the Mandapam is in the same row of buildings.

During the Navaratri days, the Saraswati Devi idol (ceremoniously brought in procession from Padmanabhapuram of erstwhile Travancore about 35 km away) would be worshipped at the Mandapam with music concerts of top ranking Vidwans forming part of the offering in the evenings. It is much more than a 'temple concert' and one has to live the experience which is beyond words. The tradition is continued till date thanks to the benevolence of the descendants of the Royal family. The evening concerts on all nine days of Navaratri would be precisely for two and a half hours from 06.00 p.m., but only after the customary Thodayamangalam at the same venue by the Mullaamodu Bhagavathars for half an hour 05.30 to 06.00 p.m. No entry into the Mandapam would be permitted after 6 p.m. and only those who arrive early will get to sit right in front of the Vidwans.

Customarily only compositions of Swati Tirunal shall be sung in the Mandapam. And for each day of the Navaratri, there is a specific kriti which has to be rendered with Aalaapana, Taanam, Niramal and kalpanaswara followed by Tani avaratanam in Mridanga. Mangalam - Bhujagasaayina nama mangalam in Yadukulakambodhi- will be sung only on the final day

MDR's music in the Mandapam

I was eight when I listened to Sri MDR for the first time at the divine ambience of the Mandapam. The place was fragrant with flowers and lit with just oil lamps. What an experience it was! After the Todayamangalam led by Harihara Bhagavathar was over, the 'half kattai sruti' of the Tambura filled the atmosphere. I remember faintly it was Sri TN Krishnan on the Violin and Sri Palghat Raghu on the Mridangam. MDR meditated for a few seconds on the Sruti and began



MDR in a concert with TNK and Palghat Mani Iyer

with a sketch of *Naata* for the Varnam ‘*Sarasi-janaabha*’ in Aadi Tala in a pace unique to him. The charanasahitya ‘*Maanita sugunaseela*’ with a swaraakshara at ‘Ma’ was sheer delight. And that was it! Like many others, I had been enslaved to the Uthamasangitam of Sri MD Ramanathan.

Over the successive years till I finished my College, I attended all concerts of MDR at the Mandapam. The deep and resonant voice, vilambakaala rendering and choice of kritis mesmerised everyone. The much commented gestures of MDR went into oblivion once the concert began and a discerning rasika just saw music in human form!

MDR would often choose Kedaram for a brief alapana after the Varnam. I still believe that the Mandra Panchama of Kedaram has not been touched as grandly as MDR - not to say of his natural access even to the Mandrashadjam taking us to the depth of swarastanas! ‘*Paramaanandanatana*’ - the composition with the anupallavi ‘Dhrikita Dhom Dhom, Dhrikita Dhom Dhom, Dhrikita Dhom Dhom, Taka tatik-inadhom iti’ depicting the celestial natana of Lord Siva would be delightful.

‘*Paripaalaya maam Sri Padmanabha Murarey*’ in Reetigoula - the raga apparently ‘made for MDR’ was another masterpiece. The Charana passage ‘*Tamarasaayatha lochana Chaaruthano*’

ending in suddha madhyama note was an MDR special!. Laya was part of MDR’s self, aptly described as ‘*Brahmalayam*’.

In the Purvilalyani kriti ‘*Deva Deva Jagadeeswara Jaya Bhujagaasana vaahana murahara*’ MDR never left the pallavi at ‘*Jayabhujaga*’ or ‘*Bhujagaasana*’ but rendered ‘*Bhujagaasanavaahana*’ in full to describe Garuda, the Vaahana of the lord.

Yadukulakambodhi and the comparatively rare kriti ‘*Mohanam ayi Tava Muraliganamaho*’ rendered in an athi vilambakaala misra (chapu) was MDR’s forte. The rasika would be enchanted by the beauty and grandeur of the giant of a raga. On a few occasions, MDR has sung ‘*Jagadeesa sadaa*’ in ‘*Natakurinji*’ (Aadi Tala). See, all weighty ragas!

MDR used to render the main kriti of the day in detail. The Taanam would be unique, in slow gait but traditional. MDR had sung more on intervening days i.e., 2nd to 8th of the Navaratri. ‘*Pahimam Sri Vageeswari*’ (Kalyani), ‘*Bharati Maamava*’ (Todi), ‘*Janani pahi*’ (Suddha saveri), ‘*Pahi janani*’ (Natakurinji), ‘*Janani Maamava*’ in Bhaiaravi etc. attained immense glory in his recitals. Niraval was expressive of the meaning of the verse and swaraprastaaras firm on laya. The ragabhava was uppermost in the renderings.

‘*Smara janaka*’ (Behag), ‘*Vihara maanasa raame*’ (Kapi) were frequently sung in the post

main session, the later being one of his favourites. The Mangalam for all concerts was 'kalitha varasethubandham' in *Madhyamavati* (the last Charana of *Bhavayami* - the exquisite raga-malika on Ramayana. I remember a rare occasion when MDR sang *Bhavayami* in full but scintillatingly in a nutshell!

The accompanists have had thrilling but challenging role in accompanying MDR. The pauses and gaps so common in the recital have to be imaginatively supplemented. Of the various accompanists in the Mandapam, Chalakudy Narayanaswamy and TN Krishnan have been on the violin more often. Palghat Raghu seemed to be MDR's favourite Mridangist though Vellore Ramabhadran and T K Murthy have also accompanied MDR on the Mandapam.

The Bhajanapura palace and Vidwans in discussion:

As my father knew Violin maestro Sri TN Krishnan in person, he used to visit him at the Bhajanapura Palace during the concert days in the afternoons. Bhajanapura palace is a separate building but in the same complex where the Vidwans stayed for the concert. My father took me along with him and as the concert would only start sharp at 6 pm., we could see the galaxy of the great Vidwans there. It has been always interesting and educative to listen to Vidwans discussing among themselves on their concert experiences etc.

Palghat Raghu would be mostly seen with MDR if the concert days matched and would be reminiscing aspects related to laya. "Anna, do you remember, at the concert last week, you sang swaras for Paralokabhaya 7 thalli - referring to a concert elsewhere!" the Mridanga Vidwan was seen asking MDR once. Appadiyaa? Enakke theriyadey! - was MDR's reply! Palghat Raghu went on to explain how that happened so spontaneously and without any hitch! "Avanukku ellaame sulabham" (Everything is so easy for him) - opined the grand old Veena Vidwan MK Kalyanakrishna Bhagavathar who was sitting nearby. Now it was MDR's turn: "Swami, neenga innacki madhyanam padutthundavaakileye *Narayanagoula* varnam vaasichadhu naanum ket-

ten" (Respected Sir, I heard you playing *Narayanagoula* ata tala varnam, in the afternoon so casually keeping the Veena across your chest while relaxing in the bed") A stellar example of mutual admiration!

Palghat KV Narayanaswamy invariably volunteered to tune the Tambura to MDR's concert pitch. The first string (Panchama) would always pose challenge due to the low pitch and MDR would say: Adhu eppovume Sramam than! Elaam Narayanan paathuppaan!(It is always difficult, Narayanan will take care. Incidentally the then Tambura player's name also was Narayanan!) He was simple yet a great person.

I have also been fortunate to see the great Vidwans Palghat Mani Iyer, Alathur Srinivasa Iyer, Papa Venkataramiah, Lalgudi Jayaraman, Palghat Raghu, Umayalpuram K Sivaraman, KS Narayanaswamy, KK Sivaraman, R Venkataraman, Sathur AG Subramaniam, TK Govinda Rao, MA Kalyanakrishna Bhagavathar in concert at the Mandapam and at the Bhajanapura Palace in conversation with MD Ramanathan!

Proceeding for the Concert

Before the concert, MDR would apply Vibhuti, perform Sandhyavandanam and offer evening prayers. The Kutcheri dress would be the customary Panchakaccha Veshti and angavastram. He would wear a Rudraksha chain without fail. The scene of the Maha Vidwan walking towards the Mandapam along with the accompanists has been a sight to behold!

On reaching the Mandapam, MDR would prostrate (Saashtaanga prannam) before the Saraswathi sannadhi before taking his seat for the concert. The mural of Goddess on the wall behind the Vidwans would form the perfect background

It is often reminisced in music circles that Reeti Goula, Kedaram and Sahana just 'walked away' with MD Ramanathan! No exaggeration, this.

MDR was literally in communion with the ragadevatha-s.

Ariyakudi - Architect of modern concert format

CP Chikkanna



It was Sri Ramanavami music festival in Bangalore in 1961. The specially erected thatched pendal in Seshadripuram High school quadrangle and the park opposite to it was jam packed with enthusiastic listeners blocking the main road bisecting the school and the park where a grand concert was going on. Out of curiosity and to have a look at the performers, I sneaked inside the pendal and occupied a corner. When the song was concluded, there was a chorus "Once more please" rent the air. Taken aback by this unexpected demand, the performer looked at the violinist. He smilingly nodded his head in support of the audience's demand, whereas the mridangam player was silently watching. The song was repeated again for a thunderous applause. It was more impactful than the first version! The song was Tyagaraja's

Sri Raga Pancharathna "Endaro Mahanubhavulu". The performer was Ramanuja Iyengar accompanied by Mysore T. Chowdiah on the violin and Palghat TS Mani Iyer on the mridangam. I was arrested and confined to my corner for the entire session by the music. In my experience of over 55 years of listening, that was the only incident when the same song was rendered twice in a concert! That was my first exposure to Carnatic music in the series in which almost all the leading musicians like MS Subbulakshmi, ML Vasanthakumari, KB Sundarambal, GNB, Chamba, Alathur Brothers, Madurai Mani Iyer etc were invited.

Ramanuja Iyengar hailed from an unbroken tradition of shishya parampara of Thyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshithar. Patnam Subramanya Iyer was trained by the direct disciple of Tyagaraja and Dikshithar. Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Iyengar (Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar), the guru of Ramanuja Iyengar was a disciple of Patnam Subramanya Iyer. Thus, the songs rendered by Ramanuja Iyengar were authentic versions of these great composers, with some frills (ornamentation) created by the singer. Iyengar's music represented the true pattern of Carnatic music, which is mainly gamaka oriented. Every note of him was with some gamaka. He has to his credit the largest number of compositions of the Trinity, post trinity composers, simple Pallavis and miscellaneous items after the Pallavi. It is he, who codified and adopted to modern times the aspects of a concert in a capsule form, the spacing and timings so well that both the learned and lay listeners never had dull moment of boredom throughout his concert.

Ramanuja Iyengar's music served as a touch stone to judge the performance of other musicians because of the maintenance of basic traditions of purity and balance. Gamaka Shudda, the



Ariyakudi in a concert with TNK and Palghat Mani Iyer

prime importance to madhyamakala and strict maintenance of timely admixture of Sowkya, madhya and dhurithakala, use of appropriate gamakas in the purses and different Jiva swaras were his forte. The importance of madhyamakala is the soul of our music and has been repeatedly emphasised/demonstrated from the days of the Trinity and the later period composers. There were as much movement and life in his vilambakala krithis and ragas. He rose to eminence by sheer merit, untiring efforts and not by sycophancy or by seeking Royal patronage, indulging in short cut methods etc. to fame. He never sacrificed his ideals for personal gains nor to please a particular section of the society by diluting them to meet the tastes of the masses.

He had great reverence for his art. The amount of concern he showed for the success of his performances foregoing the well deserved naps in the afternoon on the day of concert, observing silence, planning the itineraries, practicing each song vigorously and giving instructions to his assisting disciples indicate the extent of his preparedness and how humble he was. He was never complacent that comes after an established reputation/career that kills progress and improvement of the art at any time during his

life time. He spent each day by practicing/learning new compositions and the way he conducted his performances without indulging in diversions and unintended offence under provocation to his accompanists. In his concerts, techniques were always given proper places never obtruding aesthetics.

He belonged to a family of astrologers of Chettinad in interior south Tamil Nadu. Music was a part of their lives. As the horoscope of Ramanujam suggested a bright future in music, his father Tiruvenkatachariar sent his son to Malayappa Iyer and later to Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar, the greatest exponent of that period. Thus after receiving a strong foundation, Ramanuja Iyengar joined Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar under gurukula vasa. Iyengar was large hearted and a strict disciplinarian in his teachings. Ramanuja Iyengar made his debut in a wedding ceremony at Chettinad. After his guru's performance, the host expressed a desire to listen to Srinivasa Iyengar's pupil to the accompaniment of Semmangudi Narayana Swamy Iyer on the violin and Alaga Nambi Pillai's mridangam that caused nervousness in Ramanuja Iyengar. He was encouraged by the guru and the disciple received wholesome compliments from the guests and the accompanying giants after the performance.

It was Violinist Tiruchi (Malaikote) Govindaswamy Pillai who played an important role in launching Ramanuja Iyengar to fame.

Ramanuja Iyengar's concerts were always within the frame work of tradition and remarkable. His raga alapanas, embellishment of songs, improvisations of phrases (niravals) and kalpana swaras were stimulating and never in excess. They were well polished and balanced with his pace neither too slow nor too fast and were highly pleasing and touched/created the feelings in the listeners. His concerts covered the initiated and lay listeners simultaneously. Age old ragas, Varnas, the Tyagaraja Pancharathnas, Divya Prabhandas, Tillanas, Tiruppugal, Javalis etc. were well planned and presented to the satisfaction of listeners. Time honoured major ragas like Thodi, Kambodhi, Kalyani, Shankarabharana, Poorvi Kalyani etc. were all his favourites. He presented the salient features of these ragas and was able to bring out their true aesthetics, squeezing out their essence, beauty and overall effect within 5 to 6 minutes creating sumptuous satisfaction which is the rarest of the rare experience to listeners and a record for ever. Another notable point in his concert is the quick succession in presenting the concert itineraries without pause or rest in between that was amazing even at that advanced age. Blessed are those who were privileged to enjoy his concerts.

In his youthful exuberance, he used to give two recitals a day, each a minimum of 4 hours duration without fatigue after assiduous practice with an earnest desire to learn more and more, peering deep into the art have all enriched his repertoire. Whenever any new song/composition attracted him, he would not rest until he mastered it and presented in his concerts. That was his determination and enthusiasm. According to his senior disciple Rajam Iyer, a typical Ramanuja Iyengar's concert always started with a varnam in three speeds, one of the Pancharathna kritis and the concert itineraries depended upon the occasion and duration of the concert. If it is a major concert, few major ragas with heavy pieces, Ragam, Tanam and Pallavi and in between some madhyamakala kritis were presented without slackening the tempo. Each

song was pregnant with rich raga/sahithya bhava/kalaprmana and revealed the raga swaroopa in its entirety.

In the words of GNB, Ramanuja Iyengar is a "Sangitha Dharma Paripalaka" by fostering with genuine care, real interest, and innate strength of Carnatic Tradition. According to noted violinist, Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan, Iyengar was very large hearted and highly sympathetic and encouraged youngsters whom he considered as apparent heirs of Carnatic music. When he was a boy of 12, Ramanuja Iyengar performed to his violin accompaniment. On that day, what all the lad knew were the concert itineraries and the doyen scaled down to the boy's level and still the concert was a major success leading to his highly accomplished long innings in Carnatic music. Another interesting aspect of Ramanuja Iyengar is his accompanists viz: Mysore T Chowdaiah on the violin and Palghat Mani Iyer's mridangam who were always his first choice. He accepted concerts only after the organisers ensured the availability of these two and in their pre occupation, his next choice were Papa Venkataramaiah, TN Krishnan, Kumbakonam Rajamanickam Pillai etc. on the violin, Palani Subramnaya Pillai and Murugabhupathy etc. on mridangam. In the late 1920's Chowdaiah was in Madras along with his Guru Bidaram Krishnappa for a concert. Some organisers were looking for a substitute violinist to accompany Ramanuja Iyengar in the absence of the violinist. They approached Bidaram and requested him to permit Chowdaiah to fill the gap. The concert was a roaring success and that relation lasted during their entire life time.

Another highlight of Iyengar's concert was Palghat Mani Iyer's double Thani Avartanam. After a major song with detailed Ragalapana, Neraval and kalpana swaras, the first round of Tani Avartanam was a delight. The next Tani was after the Pallavi which was short and sweet. Perhaps, it was only in Ramanuja Iyengar's concert that Mani Iyer played Thani twice. In the year 1964, All India Radio's Madras station celebrated Purandaradasa's week long festival in which MS Subbulakshmi's live concert was relayed by all the South Indian Radio stations directly from

Hampi's Purandara Mantapa on the banks of river Tungabhadra and the next day Ramanuja Iyengar's recital in which he presented a spacious ragalapana of *Thodi* and the song "*Kangal inyaatako Ranga*" and the keertana in *Shankarabharana* "*Pogadhiralo Ranga*" etc. which are still reverberating and etched deep in my memory. Although, Kannada language was alien to him, he took great care in his diction rendering the song with appropriate bhava.

Ramanuja Iyengar always took great care of his voice. He was very strict in his diet and limited food and avoided cold stuffs like lemon, citrus fruits and ice cream. His only passion was snuff that was specially prepared for him and GN Balasubramanyam from Tanjore. There was a beauty in inhaling the snuff during his concerts when the violinist was playing the ragalapana. Despite this extreme caution, sometimes his voice would not be in its usual timbre and responsive. Still, the doyen adjusted and planned the concert itineraries without heavy stuffs straining the voice further in such a way that it gave a different/new experience to listeners! He was highly jovial, exchanging pleasantries with accompanists and those around him, polished/diplomatic and sensitive in professional matters and equally tough in confrontation. Due to his efforts, the compositions of Papanasam Sivan acquired fame and popularity. Unable to digest this, he served a legal notice to Ramanuja Iyengar demanding a share in his concert fee. Ramanuja Iyengar sent a reply notice demanding hefty amount for popularising his compositions! Thereafter Iyengar stopped singing Sivan's songs in concerts.

Several Mani Iyer's admirers had gathered in Ramanuja Iyengar's concert in the rock fort Temple at Tiruchirapalli and were applauding Mani Iyer's each avartana that distracted Iyengar's concentration and enraged him. He took the next song without showing the thala beats/counts. Mani Iyer gave a silent and shocking reply to the performer by resting his arms on the instrument until the vocalist realised his mistake. Ramanuja Iyengar became highly alert and never indulged in confrontation with his accompanists thereafter under any circumstances.

To mark his 75th birth anniversary in 1965, Bangalore's Malleswaram Sangeetha Sabha honoured him with a ponnadai and presented an address of felicitation. Replying to the honour, his speech was as short and sweet as his music. "If at all I am still performing in the evening of my life, it is by the grace of Almighty, my revered Gurus and your love and affection showered on me. May God bless all of you". His birth centenary was celebrated by organising a weeklong festival in 1991 and a special commemorative issue of "Nadopasana" the Sabha's monthly bulletin was brought out in which many musicians and authors paid glowing tributes to the maestro and shared their experiences with him and his music.

He advised Head Master GV Narayana Swamy Iyer, father of GN Balasubramanyam not to come in the way of his son's passion for music, foreseeing a great career ahead of him after being convinced of the breezy style and speedy rendering of GNB. He was the first recipient of the Sangeetha Natak Akademi award instituted by the Govt of India. The entire music fraternity gathered in the Madras airport to give him a warm send off to New Delhi to receive the award from the President of India, followed by numerous titles and awards in his career. The friendship between Chowdaiah and Ramanuja Iyengar was very intense even in death. Chowdaiah succumbed to heart attack during the third week of January in 1967, whereas Ramanuja Iyengar followed Chowdaiah, the very next week due to multiple organs failure. Condoling his death, Mani Iyer commented "it is time to sing Mangalam to Carnatic Music". In his message, Semmangudi expressed a desire to sing like Ramanuja Iyengar at least in his next birth. Ramanuja Iyengar's disciples were very large who have carved a niche for themselves emulating their guru. The most outstanding amongst them were Palghat KV Narayana Swamy, Madurai N Krishnan, B Rajam Iyer and Alleppy Venkateshan. Ramanuja Iyengar's period was a precious/important chapter in the history of Carnatic music.

Lalitha Kala Suma



Cultural terrorists

CP Chikkanna

Audio and Video marketing rights of 150th Aradhana of Saint Tyagaraja was bought by the Chennai Based Company. Secretary of the Sri Thyagabrahma Mahostava Sabha, the Late Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan, myself and some representatives of the company arranged cassettes release function with the co-operation of Bangalore Gayana Samaja. We invited the then Governor of Karnataka, the Late Khurshid Alam Khan to release the recording albums. Dr. H Narasimiah, noted educationist and great connoisseur, Dr. K Kasturi Rangan and the former president of Gayana Samaja, the late Kamalanath were the guests. Wide publicity through the media resulted in large turnout of enthusiasts to buy the recordings in the Samaja hall.

Half an hour before the scheduled arrival of His Excellency, a representative from Raj Bhavan handed over a message addressed to Vaidyanathan. Due to sudden indisposition of his Excellency's wife, he had extended his stay at Delhi and hence his inability to attend the function. All the dignitaries decided to postpone the function to a future date. A second release function was arranged jointly with the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Dr. K Kasturi Rangan, former judge of Karnataka High Court, Justice AJ Sadashiva and the Late Dr. Mattur Krishna Murthy, director of the Bhavan were the guests. That day, the Doyen Dr. Mysore Doreswamy Iyengar passed away. All of us after paying our

respects to the mortal remains of the Vidvan, the release function was converted into a condolence meeting and rich tributes were paid to the maestro as decided by the dignitaries, postponing the release to a future date.

The next day, a music lover in his letter to the editor of Indian Express's Bangalore edition under the caption "Cultural Terrorists" had blasted the organisers for arranging records releasing function and postponing under one reason or the other taking music lovers for a ride and playing prank on them. He mentioned that the country is terrorised by the menace of forest brigand Veerappan on the law and order front and the cultural field by the menace of these cultural terrorists and demanded action against these fake promoters. I faxed it to Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan for his reactions. He authorised me to reply and that he would endorse my statement.

In my reply, I narrated what all happened and sought the editor's reaction for converting album release function into a condolence meeting as decided by the dignitaries and whether he concurred that tributes to the Veena Maestro amounts to a prank played on the public? The next day's issue carried my reply and the matter ended there. The recordings were put to sale the same day.



Sangeet Natak Akademi award

Senior Musician Sangita kala Acharya and our own senior associate Vid. Neela Ramgopal along with 6 other Karnataka artistes will be receiving the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi awards from Hon. President of India Shri. Ram Nath Kovind on 17th of January 2018.

Ten Golden Years - Shri Varadadasa

Balaji Ramanathan

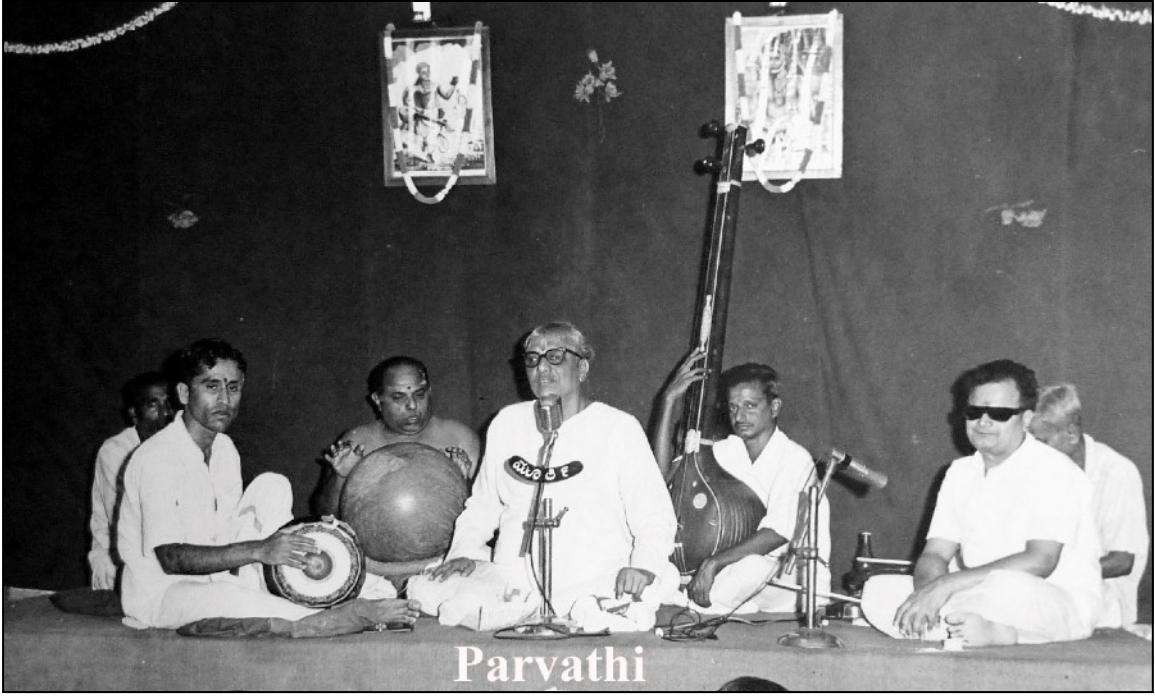
The initial 10 years remains and will remain as a golden phase of my life to have breathed, laughed and even cried with my dearest Appa, who continues to lead my life through his blessings and touch many lives through his nada yoga. Like a small plant under the grandeur of a magnificent mountain, oblivious to its backdrop, so was I, naturally ignorant and joyfully playful with all ingredients of pure naughtiness, unaware of the significance of shadowing eminence & excellence. Perhaps, I might have had the singular distinction of having facilitated him to consistently perform, from the Navarasa Shloka (sringaram ksithi nandini..), most often hovering around haasyam, roudram, karunyam not necessarily in any order. However, it is his karunyam and shantam that guide us and inspire many, even after three decades since he merged with Shri. Tyaga Brahmam.



Little did I realise the significance of a prophetic remark, that “your father will continue to live”, often repeated after his demise in 1984. Despite all the evolutionary changes in the last 3 decades, admiration to His music has manifested through this digital age, where rasikas comprehend, appreciate and celebrate his creative expressions & interpretations. He always believed in “art for art sake and that for god sake” and throughout his life, remained ever, a humble student of music. He pursued a path that opened a creative bridge between tradition and creative introspection, without any compromise of Carnatic music. In my humble opinion, this pursuit and inner urge that connected spirituality and sound, led to the emphasis that he valued on silence. As he quotes in one interview, “there is music not only in the notes, but also in the silence between the notes”. While I am least qualified by any standard to pen any thoughts or opinions about his music, I can share some of my priceless recollections of those 10 years, of which I was not just a mere witness, but an active participant limited only by constraints of age and wisdom.

Guru Bhakthi

It is well-known that Appa was an ardent devotee of Shri. Tiger Varadachariar, whom he always worshipped in thought, spirit and action, so much that our residence was picked as it provided an aerial view to ‘Govinda Vilas’, in Theosophical Society, where the great legend lived during his last years of his life. On several occasions, I have accompanied Appa in his morning walk, during which he would take a quick detour, not just to visit, but perhaps, reminisce on what he truly acknowledged as the transformational phase of his life. In his student days, he was enamoured by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and truly did see a ‘Paramahansa’ in Shri. Tiger. And, in true spirit, this Varadadasa



In a concert at Parvathi, Mysore with M Chandrasekaran, Trichy Sankaran and Bangalore KS Manjunath (Photo courtesy: "A Home called Parvathi" Shri. K Srikantiah)

remained a Vivekananda in music, for his courage, spontaneity and purity. The 6 years he spent under the protective care of his master left an ever lasting impact in his life. Even during testing times, in the last few days prior to his demise, any conversation about Shri. Tiger used to bring out a bright smile and his face would light up. Based on what I have gathered over years, I can confidently ascertain that there is no article, lec-dem or an interview without a significant reverential reference to his Guru. Another instance I personally recollect was when he received his former English teacher from Victoria College who visited our house. The excitement and joy with which he personally welcomed his elderly teacher and the mutual admiration the professor had for my father, was truly a sight that remains imprinted in my memory.

Thyaga Ramabhakthu...

Appa was a staunch devotee of Lord Rama and this was further intensified by his fondness and dedication to the compositions of Saint Thiagaraja. He belonged to the direct lineage of Shri. Tyagaraja through Shri. Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbayyar → Shri. Patnam Subramania Iyer → Shri. Tiger Varadachariar. In 1981, he conducted Srimad Ramayana Navaham at our

house over 9 day period and finally concluded with Upanyasam by legendary Bramhashri. Balakrishna Sastrigal. In 1984, he was deeply disturbed that his health condition did not permit him to perform pooja or render few kritis on the occasions of Bahula Panchami or Rama Navami. I fondly recollect his rendition of *mamava pattabhi rama* after the daily pooja to the Rama Pattabhishekam idol that he worshipped. Incidentally, the vigraham was a prize for his rendition of "Endaro Mahanubhavulu" in 1947 which he received from his most revered guru Shri. Tiger Varadachariar. Apparently it was my grand father Shri. Devesa Bhagavathar who out of sheer joy and happiness, walked from Mylapore to Adyar with this idol. As strange coincidence, on that day, the milk man had already left some excess milk at the house, as some of the residents were out of town. Apparently, my grandfather is to have correlated this holy pravesham of rama patabhishekam as a divine parallel to how Shri. Tyagaraja regained the idols of Lord Rama.

In the Shri ragam pancharatnam rendition, Appa prefixed *Thyaga* to *Ramabhakthudaina...* in the charanam to emphasise the devotee's ownership of the lord and it is this personalised devotion that must have moved and inspired him for

the beautiful composition “Shri. Thyagaraja Gurum..” in Kedaram.

Music 24X7

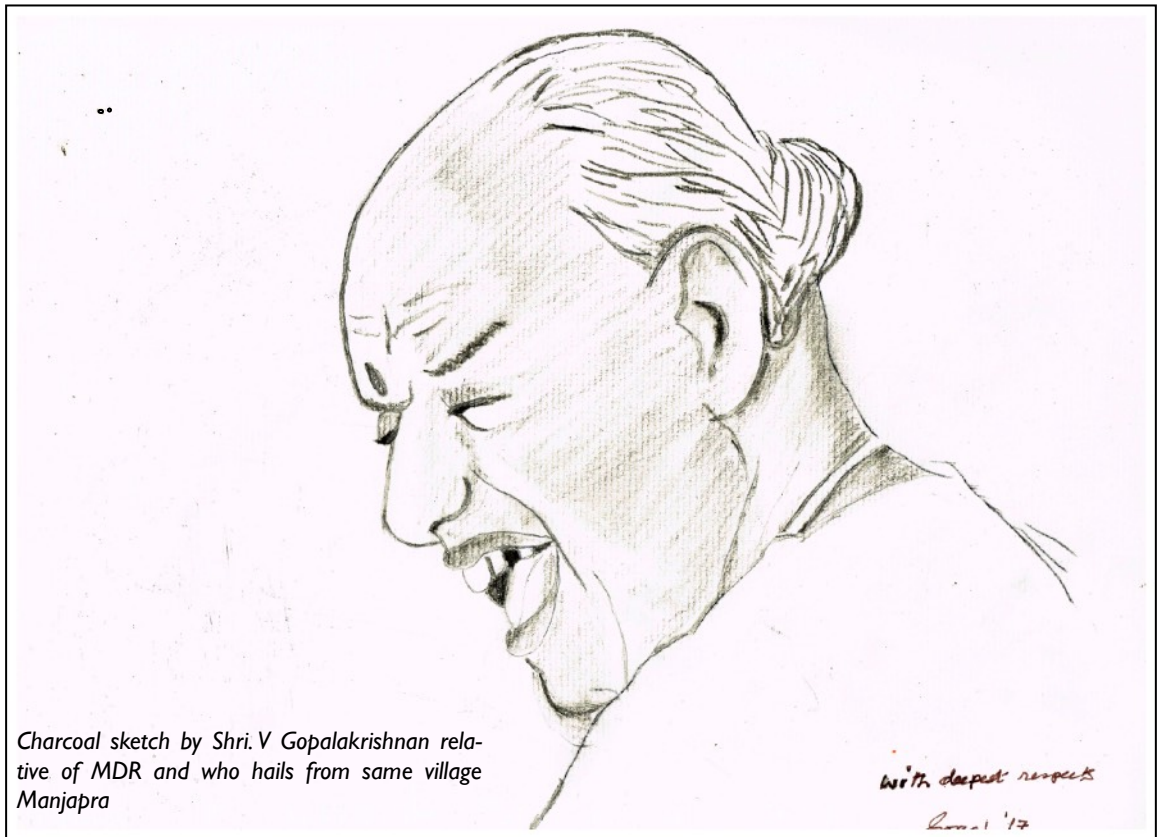
As his son, I had the privileged access and opportunity to witness many stalwarts or legends interact with my father on several occasions. Often our residence used to be frequently decorated by the presence of these great legends with lengthy conversations. Though there is no contextual reference that I could add here, but I do recollect the change in his voice often to highlight an observation or quote from the “Tigeropedia”. He was highly principled and followed his mantras, “observe and absorb” from his revered guru, so much that Shri. Tiger humorously address my father as “thirudan thirudan”.

Travel with my father was never a dull moment. In those 10 years, I was fortunate to have travelled with him and even during those moments,

he used to draw my attention to hear and listen to music, wherever possible. As an instance, he urged me to notice a random ‘nadai-like’ pattern in the sounds of a moving train and also keenly observe a synchronous transition of nadai in an organised panchavadyam performed at Chottanikkara Bhagavathy temple.

On concert days, he will be in a deep contemplative mood hours prior to his performance and a standard protocol was always diligently followed by his students. Despite his deteriorating health conditions, he continued to perform even few weeks prior to his demise. His last concert was with Shri. Lalgudi Jayaraman and Shri. TV Gopalakrishnan at the Mylapore Fine Arts auditorium.

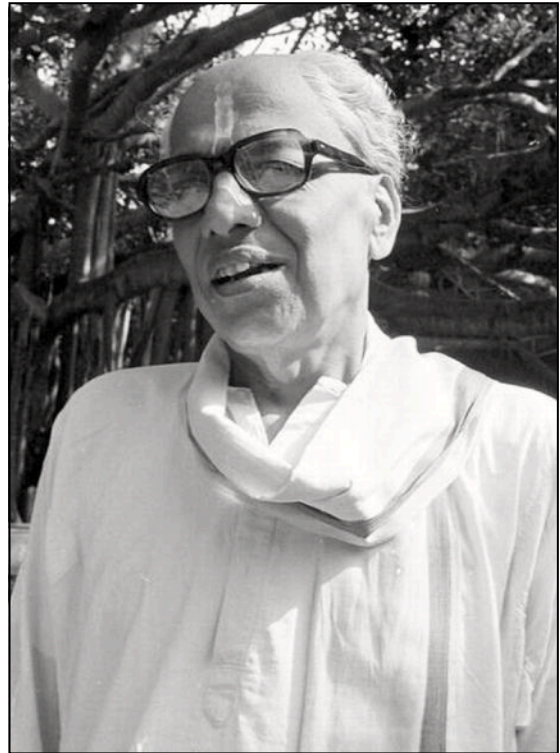
My mother Smt. Visalakshi, played a vital role in not only facilitating a peaceful ambience, but also remained absolutely positive and supportive, despite stressful circumstances, that an



Charcoal sketch by Shri. V Gopalakrishnan relative of MDR and who hails from same village Manjapra

artist normally endures in life. In my opinion, music for Appa was not just mere passion or profession, it was his access to divinity through the nada that emerged from his deep voice or the subtle nada that was present in the pauses in-between.

Over time, I have realised and continue to recognise that there is not just a singular path to identify and appreciate my father's music. Just as how a giant mountain's admiration is infinitely possible from multiple paths and views, so is the legacy that my father has created through his music. Over years, I have been astonished by the diversity in his rasikas that receive and appreciate his music with varying degrees of customisation. This is an humble observation from multiple interactions with a diverse mix of rasikas, students and testimonies from established connoisseurs of the art. As a privileged recipient of all the love, affection and blessings that we have received as a family, the power of his presence amongst rasikas and even many musicians continue to amaze us.



MDR's sense of humour

During the annual Sri Rama Navami Music festival under the aegis of Seshadripuram Sri Ramotsava Samithi, MD Ramanathan was a regular performer.

In the early 1970's he gave a memorable concert. One of the itinerary was a soul stirring ragalapana of *Dharbar* and the composition "*Yochana*" was highlighted in all its grandeur with spacious nerval and kalpana swaras followed by a Thani Avartana by Vellore Ramabhadran on Mridangam and S Seshagiri Das's Khanjira. TN Krishnan provided violin accompaniment.

The former president of Bangalore Gayana samaja, Senior advocate V Krishnamurthy was also the President of the Samithi and it was he who always delivered vote of thanks before Mangalam. In his speech, he mentioned and

praised *Dharbar* composition to sky level. In his extempore speech, inadvertently, he recounted such a thrilling *Dharbar* by MDR's Guru, Tiger Varadachariar which he enjoyed way back in 1948 at Mysore and the eighth day after that concert, Tiger passed away. Immediately Ramanathan took the mic and declared "Please excuse me. I won't oblige you Sir" sending a peel of laughter in the huge sadas. Perplexed by the comments of MDR and the audience's laughter, the President immediately rounded off his speech and anxiously inquired the reason for this incident from others and was told about the damaging meaning of his utterances. After the concert, which was extended by half an hour after the speech, he profusely apologised with the musicians for his slip of tongue and thereafter was highly cautious in his speeches.

In the Realm of Aesthetics

Deepa Ganesh, Senior Associate, LKT

Dr.T.S. Satyavathi – utter this name in the music and literary circles of Karnataka, and the response is more or less homogenous. “What a scholar, what oratory, and such a fine sense of music”. There’s more to add: Satyavathi is a warm host and modest in her demeanour. She is a Carnatic musician trained by the veteran R.K. Srikantan and her sister Vasanta Madhavi, Sanskrit scholar, music composer, has rigorously studied the theory of music under the renowned musicologist BVK Shastry and has been a mridangam student under Bangalore Venkataram. However, as Satyavathi says, every aspect of her learning – whether it is literature, musicology or percussion – it moves in the direction of aesthetic perfection.

In her long career of innumerable concerts, lectures, demonstrations, workshops etc.

Satyavathi has earned an army of admirers. She is looked upon as a serious and committed scholar and has earned prestigious accolades across the country and globally as well. If Music Academy has conferred the Musicologist award for the year 2017-18 on Satyavathi, it is no surprise.

Excerpts from an interview with her:

You are a family of musicians. Your two sisters, your brother and you are musicians. Your mother seems to be the central figure in your lives.

Music came to us by birth. People would say even doors and windows of this house sing. So, it was like we almost had no choice but to learn music. My sisters were much older to me, and they had been receiving good training from D. Subbaramaiah. My mother herself was trained in

Parents TS Srinivasamurthy and Rangalakshmi





Receiving an honour from MS Subbulakshmi. Also seen in the picture are Shri. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and Shri. Sadasivam

the Tyagaraja tradition. She was a taskmaster. I was listening to my sisters all the time, and picked up music rather early.

Both me and my younger brother would be woken up by 5 am and had to practice as long as my mother wanted us to. She also had our practice list for each day ready. If we were obedient we even got incentives. Eight annas for *atta tala varna*, four for *vilambakala kriti*, so on and so forth. We easily made ten to 12 rupees a month! But if we didn't practice, we would get it from her. Her passion for music is extraordinary. Even at 90, she remembers every kriti and prompts us if we forget.

She took us to Ramanavami concerts in Fort High school premises: tickets were too expensive, so we sat outside, close to the speakers and listened. She would buy us groundnuts and raw mangoes – we happily listened as we savoured them. I still believe casual listening is of immense value. If you force the child to recognise raga, the composer, this and that, they develop a kind of revulsion. Instead, if you get them to listen without any of these pressures, then it is more beneficial. You listen and it automatically creates a *samskara*.

My mother studied only up to high school, but was a voracious reader. Triveni, Aryambha Patambhi, all the Bengali translations... she is immensely well read. At five, I knew all the stories from Ramayana and Mahabharatha. I have gained much from this great combination of literature and music - one illuminates the other, and the meanings that emerge are endless. Even when I taught Sanskrit later in my life, I used to feel that music and literature have an inseparable relationship.

Once I did my vidwat and got national scholarship, I decided I had to learn under the veteran RK Srikantan. I was so fascinated by his music that I listened to everything that he composed and sang. With the scholarship I could afford to pay fees. That is how I went to him.

Theoretically my older sister Vasanta Madhavi was very strong, however, all of us sang, including my brother. Music was a huge part of our lives and my mother undoubtedly has a big role to play. However, I feel, we too on our part did things without asking her too many questions. We went on doing everything that she asked us to do.

Where did your father figure in all this?

My father was not much of a *samsari*. He had given all the responsibilities of the family to my mother. He was a Gandhian: very mild, benign, unambitious, unassuming, and a simple person. I don't even have memories of him paying attention to our music until much later in life. It was only after I started performing he came to every concert of mine.

He used to walk a lot, nearly five kms a day. He washed his own clothes, and led a highly disciplined life. He never desired for anything. Neither did he question my mother's decisions about us. So my mother chose our school, college, the subjects we should study... everything. We faithfully took her advice.

I did get a feeling that my father was not very much for educating girls. But he never interfered in my mother's decisions, very liberal in attitude. My parents were remarkable – they never tread each other's toes, and had deep respect for each other's personality.

My mother is very intelligent. Back then, she was far ahead of her times. To marry off her daughters was never her priority. She had great awe for knowledge, and she made sure her daughters were women of substance.



Lalitha Kala Tarangini - Dec 2017

What kind of musical relationship did you all have?

Till a point, my sisters were my teachers. My second sister Vasundhara was a wonderful teacher. But surprisingly, she had no ambition. She wanted to quietly settle down as a house wife.

My older sister Vasanta Madhavi's circumstances were different, though she was the first graduate from both sides of the family. She had to face many restrictions as she was the oldest among us. Of course, she did eventually take to teaching and performing. None of us had ever imagined music as a profession.

Do you share common views with Vasanta Madhavi on music?

We both used to discuss a lot on music. Each time we returned from a concert, we spent hours discussing and dissecting all its aspects.

I think we do have minor differences, but these are things that I have gathered, and not something that has emerged from a discussion with her. For instance, I, like my guru Srikantan, believe that the composition is sacrosanct. I don't accept any changes in the way it is rendered. But my sister, I think, feels that there should be a creative element in it. It need not be sung in the same way each time it is rendered.

You studied percussion under Bangalore K. Venkataram. How did you get there?

When I was 16, I sang Pallavi at Ganakala Parishath competition and won the first prize. Venkataram sir felt my sense of laya was good and asked me to be his student. I was excited because I was very interested in the intricacies of laya. He wanted me to become a mridangist since there was no other woman who had taken up this instrument. But my goal was set. I was interested in the study of laya, and not in the business of rhythm. I wanted to embed my musical practice into the philosophy of laya, so that it would enrich the experience of music. Also, I wanted to study Sanskrit. When he learnt this, he was indeed disappointed.

He was a gentleman, when women musicians were being fixed into their gender, he was



Being honoured by Shri. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. Also seen are Shri. BVK Sastry (left) and Late TT Vasu of The Music Academy, Chennai.

modern in his thinking. He gave me an important role in Ganakala Parishat because of which I could interact with so many musicians. But the one thing he could not tolerate was indiscipline. He would leave for work by the 7.10 a.m. bus and expected me to reach his house by 6 a.m. Even if I was late by five minutes he would shout at me. I am so grateful for meeting such wonderful people who cared so genuinely for music...

What sort of a teacher was R.K. Srikantan?

He was wonderful. Clear in his ideas, and chiselled in his approach. The frame of the raga was like a piece of sculpture – no flaws, no excesses. He was always studying the scripts of vaggeyakaras. That is how he grasped the nuances of the ragas. He would say, 'If you call a raga it should come. No other raga should come.' He was so sure of his musical vision.

Srikantan sir was very encouraging: he listened to me with a lot of happiness. By the time I met him, he had mellowed down as a teacher. MS Sheela who went to him as a girl of five, has had a hard time.

His training has taken me a long way. If I just see a script, and it says raga *Surutti*, I can sing. How *Surutti* should be interpreted was perfectly

taught in his lessons. Even the way in which he fixed speed, it was neither slow nor fast. In his musical vision was a Madhya vilamba laya... he believed that it took you close to the vision of the composer.

Your connection with literature is very intense.

I had a huge exposure to literature from childhood. After my master's in Sanskrit, and subsequently becoming a lecturer, I attended huge international seminars in college. There was an art appreciation club to which all the great literateurs were invited. Putina, Masti, Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar, Bhyrappa, G.S. Shivarudrappa, Ramachandra Sharma, DVG and more. Putina was our neighbour and I spent a lot of time in his house. He would make me sing his Shri Haricharite, indicating exactly how the notes had to flow with the rise and fall of his hands. What a great poet!

There would be a programme called Jignaasa Goshti at our college for which scholars like S.K. Ramachandra Rao used to come. I too have done several lectures on Kalidasa and other Sanskrit poets.

Tradition has become a difficult word today. It is associated with a political ideology, it is



Being facilitated by Guru RK Srikantan in the year 2004. RK Padmanabha and Veena exponent Suma Sudhindra seen in the background

regarded as obsolete, whereas visible innovation and experimentation is considered modern and progressive. How do you react to this? Tradition is such a dynamic space, isn't it?

Culture is so rich. The more you learn the more there is. It is unfathomable. But if you are not loud, and do not wear modernity on your sleeve, you are doomed to be seen as an obsolete traditionalist. Most people in a round about way tell me, "For you, old is gold after all." Our musicians are so alienated from their roots. Sadly, they have audience endorsement...., people like me are almost unheard.

When you discuss all this in small groups, musicians agree with you. But the circumstances are such that if you need to survive you will have to follow the trend. Most musicians have to go with the trend to make a livelihood. They understand the value of good music, but are helpless. They make a choice against their beliefs.

Tradition is a continuous flow, who ever knows how it was to begin with? Even though it is a flow, only when some things remain unchanged it can be called tradition. If the change is too drastic sudden and radical, then it cannot be

called tradition. I always say that with respect to tradition, you can widen the frame but cannot change the frame. The changes are like the body, but what remains unchanged is the soul.

There must be a harmonious relationship between music and literature. You cannot bring all your musical ideas into sahyta. A sense of propriety and balance is very important. I cannot bear when people break down Tyagaraja and interpret him. That's too much. Lyrics, emotion and music – they must never be severed from each other.

Among the four south Indian states that have practised Carnatic music, Tamil Nadu always remain in the forefront. What is the reason for this?

It is a reality, we have to admit it. We did not try hard to preserve Carnatic music in our homes. But in TN, every home has preserved it. We are complacent by nature, no drive and no marketing. We are people with a philosophical attitude. Exactly like our Sanskrit poets!

In Tamil Nadu they are community oriented, they encourage fellow musicians. The seniors come to the concerts of juniors, recommend



Receiving the Mudhra Award in Chennai

and promote them. They spread the word globally, and use technology well. Our audience, and our sabhas, ironically promote only artistes from Tamil Nadu and have little pride in musicians of our own State. That is also a problem.

As someone who has studied musicology too, do you like the current trends in music?

For me, music is not an intellectual exercise, it is emotional. Music should not incite, but should be replete with insights. Now music is about technique, intellect, volume and loudness. It is display of voice. Why should you sing raga Athana for 20 minutes, if its inherent nature demands only a compact presentation?

Shastra should be implicit, emotion should be explicit. Your shastra should never be visible in your singing. This is something my guru R.K. Srikantan stood by all his life. You must absorb technique, craftsmanship and allow it to be processed through your *bhaava*...it will blossom into something beautiful.

Today, connoisseurship has acquired a new meaning. It is all about brain now. They love loudness and display. Such music doesn't interest or inspire me.

Whether we like it or not, gender is a huge issue in music. Do you feel you would have

done better if you belonged to the other gender?

I feel good in my own place. Not just that, I feel sorry for men who treat us as inferior only because of our gender. I laugh at them.

There is this violinist who I honed and encouraged. The last few times I invited him to accompany me, he always came up with excuses. One day, I asked him straight. "Yes, it is true I do not like to play for women," he said, "but it is not true in the case of Sheela madam and you." Wasting no time I told him: "But we are also women. Please do not sacrifice your principles for us. I will not trouble you anymore."

Music will get better only when all kinds of egos are shattered. The good thing to do is draw a bigger circle next to you, you will realise how small you are.

What is your personal vision of music?

My vision of true good music constitutes an aesthetic approach, double underlined. Be good to others, and see the other person as your own self... this is what music has taught me.

When I go to a concert, I always praise their positives first, and then speak of the loopholes. If you cannot appreciate, be good, generous, your music will be a sad reflection of your miserliness.

SRLKMs prestigious award

Rajashree Yogananda

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira presented "Lalitha Kala Suma" awards, both at Bengaluru and Mysuru and it was presented to senior artistes, musicologists, teachers, art critics and music patrons as per the wishes of Late Smt. GV Neela, who was the chief founder of the institution.

Mandira's Hon Secretary GV Krishnaprasad and his sister GV Neela during one of their conversation sometime in May 2017 about utilising the maturity amount from the post office savings which they had invested a long time back, Neela suggested that it could be used to recognise the contributions of many senior artistes in Bengaluru and Mysuru involved in the propagation of Karnatak music.

Smt. Neela attained the lotus feet of the Divine soon after this in June. Krishnaprasad wanted to take her suggestion forward and started working towards it. The inspiration for the title Lalitha Kala Suma came from the doyen of Kan-

nada literature, the well respected Sri D.V. Gundappa's poem "Vana Suma". In this poem, he mentions that there are many flowers in the forest which blossom and give out sweet fragrance without any expectations, but find joy in the work they are ordained to do. As SRLKM has completed 62 years of service towards music, Krishnaprasad felt it appropriate to honour 62 senior artistes from Bengaluru who have made valuable contribution to the society by propagating Karnatak music and are the mainstay for our culture and music.

His Holiness Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar of Yathiraja mutt who encourages and is a well wisher for all the activities of Mandira graciously accepted to be present for the awards ceremony. As it happened to be his thiru nakshatram on that day, Wednesday 23rd August 2017 wherein he would turn 68, Mandira decided to honour 68 artistes. It was decided that each of the artiste would be felicitated





separately as they rightly deserved. The award also carried a purse of ten thousand rupees and medal. SRLKM requested former Station Director of AIR Bengaluru, Sri NS Krishna Murthy to present the awards to the artistes which he did very graciously.

Prior to the awards presentation, there was a musical tribute “Naadanjali” in memory of its chief founder Smt.G.V.Neela and the vocal concert was given by Kum.Anagha Yoganand who is also the great grand daughter of SRLKM founder G Vedantha Iyengar and a senior disciple of Smt.GV Neela. Anagha was ably accompanied on the violin by vid. Shankar Rajan on the violin and Vid. Phanindra Bhaskara on the mridangam.

There was also a surprise in store at the awards programme, as Dr. Meenakshi Ravi on behalf of all the recipients of Lalitha Kala Suma award, and her Institution Meera Centre for Music Therapy, Education and Research, gave the award and title “Utkrushta Sangeetha Kala Poshaka Samsthe” to SRLKM and awarded the title “Sangeetha Kala Chaitanya” to Sri GV Krishnaprasad.

As planned earlier, that it would be holding a similar programme in Mysuru, SRLKM decided to make it a double treat by presenting its prestigious “Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena” award to Prof. R Visweswaran followed by the “Lalitha Kala Suma” award felicitation to 32 artistes from Mysuru, there by reaching out to hundred artistes in all.

The programme was held on Friday 24th November 2017 at an elegantly held function at Sri K Vasudevacharya Bhavana in Mysuru. The programme started with an invocation which was well sung by Kum Ananya who is also the great grand daughter of G Vedantha Iyengar of SRLKM and disciple of vid.GS Kamala and GS Rajalakshmi.

Earlier to the start of the programmes, there was a flute recital by Vid.V Vamshidhar who was accompanied on violin by Vid. KJ Dileep, mridangam by Vid.A Radhesh and Ghatam by Vid. S Manjunath.

Mandira presented its prestigious “Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena” award to Prof. R Visweswaran and the honours was done by His Holiness Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar of Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Mutt, Melukote.

This programme was followed by the “Lalitha Kala Suma” awards which was presented to 32 senior artistes from Mysuru in appreciation of their services to Karnatak music. The awards were presented by Dr. Sarvamangala Shankar, vice chancellor, Karnataka State Dr. Gangubai Hangal Music and Performing Arts University and Sri KV Murthy, President, Sri Nadabrahma Sangeetha Sabha.

Both the functions were well received and with Swamiji’s blessings, it was indeed a special day for everyone present both at Bengaluru and Mysuru.

The legends of Tiruvidaimarudur in the kritis of Dikshitar

Rajani Arjun Shankar, Chennai

Tiruvidaimarudur is a Shaivite shrine of immense significance in South India. Situated near Kumbhakonam, it is on the banks of the Kaveri. Shiva is known as Mahalingeshwara and the goddess is Brhatkuchambika. The name Idaimarudu-Ur (without the honorific Tiru) is translated into Sanskrit as Madhya-Arjuna-Pura, meaning that it is the middle one of the three shrines where the Arjuna tree (*Terminalia arjuna*) is the Sthala-Vrksha. (The other two are Srisailam to its north and Tirupudaimarudur in Ambasamudram to its south)

The vastness of the temple is matched by the large number of Rishis, saints and poets associated with the place. Adi Sankara has visited the place, and all three composers of Tevaram have composed several verses here, as also Manickavachaka, Pattinathar, Arunagirinathar and many others. To this long list we can add Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar of the Carnatic Music Trinity. Three Kritis on the lord and one on the goddess are attributed to him. (One of these, 'cintayE mahAlinga mUrtim' in the Raga Paraju,

is found in the Sangeetha Sampradaya Pradarshini) There are six temples in this region, on the banks of the Kaveri, which are considered equal to Varanasi in sanctity, including Tiruvidaimarudur. It is interesting to note that Dikshitar has composed Kritis on five of these six temples (all except Chayavanam in Poompuhar.)

Tiruvidaimarudur has several musical connections. In the end of the 18th century, Amarasimha, the brother of Tulaja II of Tanjavur, was exiled and spent a few years here in Tiruvidaimarudur. He patronised many musicians and composers. One of them was the Hindustani Musician Ramdas Swami from Maharashtra. His son Pratapasimha continued the tradition of patronage. During his time, Gopalakrishna Bharatiyar spent a few years in Tiruvidaimarudur, learning Hindustani music from Ramdas Swami. Being a great Shiva-bhakta, Bharatiyar is said to have worshipped in the temple regularly, particularly going around the Ashwamedha Prakaram often, the circumambulation of which is believed to grant the merit

Terminalia Arjuna tree which is the Sthala-Vrksha at Tiruvidaimarudur





equivalent to performing the difficult Ashwamedha Yagna.

It is well known that Dikshitar weaves in the unique aspects of each Kshetra in the kritis composed there. Here are some aspects of Tiruvidaimarudur that find mention in the songs composed here:

The Lord declaring that Advaita is supreme truth

According to the Sankara Vijayam, Adi Sankara visited Tiruvidaimarudur and taught Advaita to the people there. These learned scholars agreed to accept Advaita as truth, provided their beloved lord would testify to that. So Adi Sankara took them to the sanctum and there, Shiva's right hand emerged out of the Lingam form of Shiva and everyone heard the Him say "Satyam Advaitam" thrice. Needless to say, the Vedic scholars then accepted Advaita as the ultimate truth.

Dikshitar, in the Kirti "cintaye mahAlinga mUr-tim", hints at this action of the lord in the

phrase "antaranga bhakta janAnAM - ati samIpa Rju mArga darSitaM" (the one pointing to the direct, immediate path (to salvation) to those devotees who are close to him.) In keeping with Dikshitar's masterly ways of incorporating the Raga Mudra, this phrase indicates the name of the Raga – Paraju.

The removal of Brahma-hatya and other mental afflictions

The most well-known part of Tiruvidaimarudur's legends is that of King Varaguna Pandyan being rid of his sin of Brahma-hatya, which followed him around tormenting him. The dramatic element in this incident is that the Brahma-hatya could not enter the hallowed temple premises, and waited for him to return, while the king exited through another gate, such that the beguiled monster still awaits him at the eastern tower, Dikshitar has made reference to the grace of Shiva removing great sins too

“hatyAdi pApa haraM” (the destroyer of sins like Brahma-hatya) in “cintaye mahAlinga mUrtim”

“mahA brahma hatyAdi pApa haraM” (the destroyer of great sins like Brahma-hatya) in “mahAlingESvaram”

“krUra panca hatyAdi pApa SamanAya” (the destroyer of the five cruel sins like Brahma-hatya) –in “mahAlingESvarAya”

Perhaps due to liberating King Varaguna Pandyan from the long-standing torment he underwent, the lord at Tiruvudaimarudur is especially known for providing relief from mental afflictions, fears and sorrows. This special grace of the lord finds distinct mention in the Tevaram verses too. While Appar mentions several times that Shiva removes the distress of devotees, Sundarar, in every verse, requests the lord to put an end to his endless worries and confusions. In an interesting correlation, the bark of the sacred tree Arjuna has been widely used by Ayurveda doctors over many centuries, for curing heart diseases.

This unique grace of the lord in this place has been specifically mentioned by Dikshitar. He describes Shiva as “Adhi tArakaM “(the one who liberates from distress) in and “SOkAdi haraNa padAravindaM” (the one whose lotus-foot removes sorrows) in “cintaye mahAlinga mUrtim”.

The Parivara-Devatas of Mahalingeswara

A very fascinating aspect of Tiruvudaimarudur that is described in its Sthala Puranas, is that many major temples around it form the Parivara Devata shrines of Mahalingeswara: Chidambaram would be the Nataraja shrine of this temple, Tiruvalanchuzhi the Ganesha shrine, Swamimalai the Subrahmanya shrine, Tiruvarur (Tyagaraja) the Somaskanda shrine, Tiruvavaduthurai the Nandi shrine, Seyjalur the Chandikeshwara shrine, Alangudi the Dakshinamurthi shrine and Sirkazhi(Sattanatha) the Bhairava shrine etc. It is easy to infer from this list, that each of these is a temple where that particular deity enjoys great prominence. There

are twelve such Kshetras linked to Tiruvudaimarudur.

So if one were to imagine the larger area around Kumbhakonam as a large Shiva temple, Tiruvudaimarudur would be the main shrine. This of course tells us the importance of this place.

Dikshitar has very succinctly mentioned this specialty of Tiruvudaimarudur in these lines in the Kriti “cintaye mahAlinga mUrtim” as follows:

“Srl kamalA pura sOmAskandaM cidambarESvara naTanAnandaM

Srl kALISa bhairava spandaM Siva svAmi Saila guru guha skandam”

(the one whose Somaskanda shrine is Tiruvarur, whose Nataraja shrine is Chidambaram, whose Bhairava shrine is Sirkazhi, and whose Subrahmanya shrine is Swamimalai).

To conclude, we must remember that Tiruvudaimarudur is just one sample of such magical sprinkling of the Kshetra’s unique aspects in his songs’ lyrics by Muthuswamy Dikshitar. It is just one of the many features which make his Kritis a multi-dimensional and multi-layered experience.

PS: Transliteration scheme has been followed only for the lyrics of the Kritis mentioned. Other Sanskrit words used follow general spellings.

(Rajani is a Sanskrit teacher based in Chennai, with a deep interest in Carnatic Music, particularly in the Kritis of Muthuswamy Dikshitar. She can be reached at rajani.shankar18@gmail.com)

Naada Pravaaha - An extraordinary ensemble of 82 Ghatam artists

Vidushi Sukanya Ramgopal

82 Ghatam artists from across the country came together at 'Naada Pravaaha' to celebrate the 75th birthday of Ghatam maestro Padmabhusan Sri Vikku Vinayakram. A first of its kind, this unique ensemble was organised by Sunaadam Trust and was conceptualised by Ghatam exponent Smt Sukanya Ramgopal, a senior disciple of Sri Vikku sir and founder and Managing Trustee of Sunaadam. The concert took place at Gayana Samaja, Bengaluru, on Sunday, 10th December 2017 and was organised in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts - Regional Centre Bengaluru.

Four generations of Ghatam players including the youngest - a 6-year old, enthralled the audience. The 82 artists were divided into 13 groups interestingly named after the rivers of India. These groups played in different whole and

fraction numbered talas. The invocatory piece for the ensemble was also a very unique choice of saint Shishunala Sharif's tatvapada '*Kumbaarakki eeki Kumbaaraaki*'. The concert had an overwhelming response from the audience. The hall was jam packed and the audience thoroughly enjoyed each section of the concert.

Dr. L Bhimachar, Prof. Mysore V Subramanya and Dr MRV Prasad, who were the guests for Naada Pravaaha, spoke at the event. The Ghatam makers from Devanahalli and Manamadurai were also felicitated on the occasion.

Naada Pravaaha has truly been a historic concert and will always remain a green memory for all those who were part of it.



Ghatam exponent Vid. Vikku Vinayakram felicitated

Senior Ghatam artist of Bangalore Sunanya Ramgopal who runs the Sunaadam Trust celebrated the 75th birthday of Ghatam maestro Vikku Vinayakram in style on 10th December 2017.

A disciple's respect and dedication was showcased in an outstanding manner by bringing together 82 artistes to perform on Ghatam with the maestro himself being on the stage.

Vikku Vinayakram was felicitated during the event in presence of Prof. Shri. Mysore Subramanya, Dr. L Bhimachar and Dr. MRV Prasad, President Bangalore Gayana Samaja.





Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (Regd.)

Recipient of Karnataka Sangeetha Nritya Academy award for 2015-16 (Karnataka Kalashree)

DR Srikanthiah - President, HR Yathiraj - Vice President, GV Krishnadas - Hon. Secretary, Dr: MR Yogananda - Treasurer
 9th Main, Banashankari II Stage, Bangalore - 560070. eMail - srlkmandira@gmail.com, Website: www.srlkmandira.org, Hon. Secretary - (M) 7760907939



29th Year Karnataka Classical Music Extravaganza Festivals dedicated to Late Smt. GV Neela, Chief Founder, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira

Sankranti Music Festival - Jan 2018

(Venue - Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira Open air Theatre, Time - 5.45 pm)

Spring Music Festival - Feb 2018

(Venue - Bangalore Gayana Samaja Auditorium, Time - 5.45 pm to 9 pm)

31-12-2017, Sunday

Srikrishna Mohan and Ramkumar Mohan (Trichur Brothers) - Vocal Duet
 MA Sundareswaran - Violin
 Trichur R. Mohan - Mridangam
 Kovai Suresh - Ghatam



05-01-2018, Friday
 S Saketharaman - Vocal
 Nagai Sriram - Violin
 Neyveli R Narayanan - Mridangam
 G Guruprasanna - Khanjira

01-01-2018, Monday

Vani Sateesh - Vocal
 B Vittal Rangan - Violin
 Arjun Kumar - Mridangam



02-01-2018, Tuesday

Sampagodu Vignaraja - Vocal
 HM Smitha - Violin
 Tumkur B Ravishankar - Mridangam
 Sharat Kaushik - Ghatam



03-01-2018, Wednesday

Malladi Suribabu - Vocal
 BK Raghu - Violin
 BR Srinivas - Mridangam
 SN Narayanamurthy - Ghatam



04-01-2018, Thursday

Neyveli Santhangopalan - Vocal
 CN Chandrashekar - Violin
 BC Manjunath - Mridangam
 Somashekar Jois - Konnagolu



04-02-2018, Sunday

Bombay Jayashri Rammath - Vocal
 HN Bhaskar - Violin
 Patri Satish Kumar - Mridangam
 BS Purushotham - Khanjira



05-02-2018, Monday

Amrutha Murali - Vocal
 RK Shirramkumar - Violin
 K Arun Prakash - Mridangam
 N Guruprasad - Ghatam



06-02-2018, Tuesday

Sangita Kalanidhi Sanjay Subrahmanyan - Vocal
 S Varadarajan - Violin
 Neyveli B Venkatesh - Mridangam
 Bhagalakshmi M Krishna - Morsing



07-02-2018, Wednesday

Kalavathy Avadhooth - Vocal
 HM Smitha - Violin
 HS Sudhindra - Mridangam
 Tridhy S Krishnaswamy - Ghatam



08-02-2018, Thursday

Malladi Brothers (Shriram Prasad and Ravikumar) - Vocal Duet
 Embars S Kannan - Violin
 Sangita Kalanidhi Tridhy Sankaran - Mridangam
 Alathor Rajaganes - Khanjira



09-02-2018, Friday

SR Yinay Sharva - Vocal
 B Vittal Rangan - Violin
 Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma - Mridangam
 Sunad Anoor - Khanjira



10-02-2018, Saturday

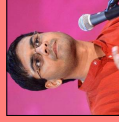
Ranjani and Gayatri - Vocal duet
 HN Bhaskar - Violin
 Sai Giridhar - Mridangam
 KV Gopalakrishnan - Khanjira



11-02-2018, Sunday

Ranjani and Gayatri will be conferred with the title "Sangeetha Vedanta Dhurina" instituted in the name of founder G.Vedanta Iyengar with a cash award of Rs. One Lakh, a Silver medal and a citation followed by a concert of:

Ramakrishnan Murthy - Vocal
 Charumati Raghuraman - Violin
 N Manoj Siva - Mridangam
 BS Purushotham - Khanjira



12-02-2018, Monday

Dr. Shobha Shashikumar - Bharatanriya Performance based on poems of classic poets like Kaalidasa, Kumaravyasa, Dr. D.V.Gundappa, and the contemporary legend Shatavadhani Dr: R. Ganesh

