

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (R)

(Distinguished Service to Carnatic Music since 1955)

Lalitha Kala Tarangini

Quarterly Music Magazine

Volume 2016, Issue 2

June 2016



Visit us online at www.srlkmandira.org
Please do share your feedback with srlkmandira@gmail.com

Vadiraja Prashasti Award with the title 'Haridasa Gana Kala Kushale' to Vid. Jayashree Varadarajan

Vidushi Jayashree Varadarajan was presented with the award 'Haridasa Gana Kala Kushale' by RKP Balaga, USA at Sri Krishna Vrundavana, San Jose, California, USA on 23rd April 2016.

Jayashree Varadarajan hails from the family of Shri. G Vedanta Iyengar founder, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, Bangalore. She is also a disciple of Vid. GV Ranganayakamma.

Jayashree Varadarajan is the Founder/Artistic Director of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandir School of Fine Arts at Sunnyvale. The mission of the institution is to enrich lives by imparting a thorough knowledge of Karnatak (South Indian Classical) music to all students regardless of background.



Vidushi Jayashree Varadarajan receiving a memento from Vidwan RK Padmanabha

June 2016

Dear Readers,

Tanjavur Shri. Sankara Iyer, born in 1924, is a living legend of Carnatic music we are happy to feature in this edition. He is one of the few connections we still have with the golden era of Karnatic music. He is a musician, musicologist and a composer who is respected by the musical fraternity wholeheartedly. MA Kalyanakrishna Bhagavathar singing his kriti 'rama namame' in Desh during 1955/56 just shows how senior musicians accepted and popularised his composition at his young age. DK Jayaraman, TV Shankarnarayan, MLV etc. were inspired by his compositions and made it a point to include them in their concerts.

Karaikudi Shri. R Mani is a revolutionary mridangist who has made a profound impact on present day youngsters. Probably number of his disciples across globe surpass anybody else, past or present. He has created a niche that nobody past or present has achieved.

He is blessed with the highest of the creativity, early signs of which were visible during his initial learning with TH Harihara Sharma. He has gone on record saying, together with Vikku Vinayakaram, he modified several of the old korvais and theeramanams which were considered holy till then. He is credited with creating a bhani of his own from scratch 'Karaikudi Mani Bhani', while many other mridangist inherited it through Gurukulavasam.

Guru Mani Sir came under the spiritual spell of Guru Surajananda during 1973. So much was his involvement that he went to the extent of leaving Mridangam and becoming his disciple. Fortunately for the music world, that did not happen.

He is also the pioneer of Thani Avarthanam concert that brought about the much needed respect for the layavadhyam especially the Upapakkavadhyam. He has collaborated with world renowned artists that gave a special status for our Indian artists abroad. If many of the laya artists today networked with their counterparts in other parts of the globe, the credit definitely goes to Guru Mani Sir. After MS Amma, he is the true international artiste who commanded highest respect with international artistes.

Probably one of his unfulfilled ambition was not to have learnt from the legend Palghat Mani Iyer. When the opportunity came by, Mani Iyer is supposed to have asked him to focus on his education. We dedicate this special edition to Guru Karaikudi Mani Sir.

We are featuring an interesting article on making of the Venu (Carnatic Flute) that is bound to help some of our young flute practitioners.

Happy reading and as always, do provide us your valuable feedback.

Anand S

Contributors - Shylaja and Venugopal TS Mysore, Vidwan Suresh Vaidyanathan, Dr. BM Sundaram, Vidwan Neyveli R. Santhanagopalan, Rajashree Yogananda, Shailesh Ramamurthy, Sachi R Sachidananda, Priyanka Prakash, CP Chikkanna.

Photo Courtesy - Paniraj, The Hindu archives, Personal collection Vidwan V Suresh, Vidwan Amrit, Vidwan MT Rajakesari, TS Venugopal, Krishnaraj Bayar. The Hindu Archive, Sri Jayendra School, Sankar Nagar, Tirunelveli, Parivadini.

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 Sankranti 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.

All Rights Reserved- All articles, photographs and material appearing in this magazine whether in whole or part is copyright of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira exclusively. No part of this magazine should be reproduced or stored in any form without prior consent. While Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira takes all the care to verify the correctness of information, it is quite possible that there could be an occasional inaccuracy in our publication.

Magazine Committee

Editor - Anand S

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

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



Content

- | | |
|--|--|
| 04 A teacher with a passion and a mission | 26 Chitravina Ravikiran - Journeying through Tirukural |
| 09 Ghatam Suresh on Guru Mani | 28 MT Rajakesari on Guru Karaikudi Mani |
| 12 Taval | 31 Veena Balachander's fury |
| 14 Tanjavur Shankara Iyer: A Friend, Philosopher and Guide | 32 All pure gold, no wastage |
| 17 Saint Thyagaraja, A musical play | 36 Parivadini, making a difference |
| 20 From Bamboo to Veṇu... | 39 Kunnakudi's encounter with Chowdaiah |
| 24 OST on Guru Karaikudi Mani | |

Lalitha Kala Tarangini - Inbox

Dear Sri Krishnaprasad,

"Lalitha Kala Tarangini" quarterly music magazine is a 'divine light' in my opinion in music sphere. The contents of the issue are highly informative and intellectual in the issue of March 16, especially the interview and facts of Vidhushi Padmavathy Ananthagopalan. Among the veena artists she must be the senior most. Her contribution to the field of Karnatic music is highly respectable one. Though she belongs to Lalgudi family, her contribution is extraordinary. As a Veena artist, she has trained many versatile musicians including Jayanthi Kumaresh. Hats of to Lalitha Kala Tarangini for having published every detail and informative article on this great artist.

Article "Prakrithi in Muthuswamy Dikshitar compositions" by Dr. S.C. Sharma was informative. It clearly registers the skill of the compositions of Dikshitar from all angles.

Guru Vedavalli and reminiscence of N. Ramani reminds the volume of interesting facts of the legendary musicians. The new topic "PSN" Parampara 2016, is much inspiring material to those younger generations who are seeking a style of their mentor.

In all, the magazine is informative and is a facebook of in and around of Karnatic music world.

regards,

Vidwan N. Anantha Padmanabha Rao

ಸನ್ಮಾನ್ಯ ಶ್ರೀ ಕೃಷ್ಣಪ್ರಸಾದ್,

ಸಹೋದರ ಸಮಾನರಾದ ಸನ್ಮಾನ್ಯ ಶ್ರೀ ಕೃಷ್ಣಪ್ರಸಾದ್ ಅವರಿಗೆ ನಮಸ್ಕಾರಗಳು. ತಾವು ಅಭಿಮಾನಪೂರ್ವಕವಾಗಿ ಕಳುಹಿಸಿರುವ 'ಲಲಿತಕಲಾ ತರಂಗಿಣಿ' ಮಾಜ್ಞೆ ೨೦೧೬ ಸಂಚಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಆದರದಿಂದ ಸ್ವೀಕರಿಸಿದ್ದೇನೆ.

ತಾವು ಸುಮಾರು ಅರವತ್ತು ವರ್ಷಗಳ ಹಿಂದೆ ಸ್ಥಾಪಿಸಿ ಅತ್ಯುನ್ನತ ಮಟ್ಟಕ್ಕೆ ಬೆಳೆಸಿರುವ 'ಶ್ರೀ ರಾಮ ಲಲಿತಕಲಾ ಮಂದಿರ' ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರೀಯ ಸಂಗೀತಕ್ಕೆ ಮಾಡಿರುವ ಸೇವೆ ಅಪಾರ. ಕಲಾವಿದರು ಮತ್ತು ಕಲಾರಸಿಕರು ಮೆಚ್ಚುವಂತಹ ಹಾಗೂ ನಿಷ್ಪಾರ್ಥ ಸೇವೆ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಿರುವ ತಮ್ಮ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗೆ 'ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಕಲಾಶ್ರೀ' ಪ್ರಶಸ್ತಿಯನ್ನು ನೀಡಿ ಅಕಾಡಮಿಯು ತನ್ನನ್ನು ತಾನೇ ಗೌರವಿಸಿಕೊಂಡಿದೆ. ಈ ವಿಷಯವನ್ನು ಮಾರ್ಚ್ ಸಂಚಿಕೆಯಿಂದ ತಿಳಿದು ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಸಂತೋಷಗೊಂಡಿದ್ದೇನೆ. ತಮ್ಮ ಈ ಸೇವೆಯು ನಿರಂತರವಾಗಿ ನಡೆಯಲಿ ಎಂದು ಭಗವಂತನಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಾರ್ಥಿಸುತ್ತೇನೆ.

ಎಂದಿನಂತೆ ಸಂಚಿಕೆಯು ನಯನ ಮನೋಹರವಾಗಿಯೂ ಸಂಗ್ರಹ ಯೋಗ್ಯವಾಗಿಯೂ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸಲ್ಪಟ್ಟಿದ್ದು ಸಂಗೀತ ರಸಿಕರಿಗೆ ಮುದ ನೀಡುವುದರಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂದೇಹವಿಲ್ಲ. ತಮಗೆ ನಾನು ಆಭಾರಿಯಾಗಿದ್ದೇನೆ.

ಧನ್ಯವಾದಗಳೊಡನೆ,

ತಮ್ಮ ಸಹೋದರಿ

ವೀಣಾ ವಿಮುಷಿ ಎಂ. ಕೆ. ಸರಸ್ವತಿ

To the editor,
Lalitha Kala Tarangini

Kudos to SRLKM for the successful conduct of Spring Music Festival. SRLKM under the able office bearers have taken great interest, put in adequate efforts and long preparations well in advance every year to provide listeners music of the highest quality free of cost, an unique achievement indeed.

The inaugural concert by Bombay Jayashri saw a packed auditorium with many listeners listening in the corridors. Her gesture of inviting them to the stage was very gracious. Her painting of Shankarabarana raga with due emphasis on the pivotal notes covering the entire contour for over an hour including the kriti was a treat! But I was disturbed in enjoying the nuances of her pleasing melody by the high volume of mridangist Patri Satish Kumar.

The pleasure of Jayashri's pleasing recital was totally washed out by TM Krishna's recital! In brief, it was Carnatic music in Hindustani paddati and nobody understood what he presented in Shankarabarana's opening piece. Many walked out in the mid session, in pure disgust.

Priya sisters presented a planned concert while Sudha Raghunathan lived up to the expectation of the listeners.

Ranjani and Gayatri scored brilliantly in the dwi raga pallavi in Kannada and Kaanada and the ragamalika kalpana swaras with their scholarly explorations carried listeners to ecstasy.

As usual Sanjay, the hero of the year's festival displayed his class in majestic style.

Listeners are deeply indebted to SRLKM for this week long music extravaganza.

Your's faithfully

CP Chikkanna

Request your attention

Your 'Lalitha Kala Tarangini' in circulation for close to three years, is completely funded by 'Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira'. We print about 400 copies every time and the magazine is circulated free to musicians, musicologists and serious rasikas. Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira has always kept up the best of the standard and the magazine is today a treasure to people. Many have preserved the copies for posterity.

We are reaching out to you at this time, requesting for contribution to 'Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira' voluntarily and liberally (Indian Residents only) just so that we can continue serve the cause of music. If you are keen to support and participate, kindly make your contributions as below;

- 1) Cheques can be sent to SRLKM. Mark your cheque in favour of "Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira". Also mention your name and phone on the back of it.
- 2) Online transfers can be effected to 'Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira' A/c No. 0473101915798, IFSC code CNRB0000473, Canara Bank, DVG Road Branch, Basavanagudi, Bangalore.

Send us a mail (srllkmandira@gmail.com) with subject as 'SRLKM Donation' intimating the Payment details for despatching a receipt. All donations carry Tax exemption as per 80G of IT Act, 1961.

A teacher with a passion and a mission

Shylaja and Venugopal TS Mysore

AV Prakash is another name for flute teaching in Karnataka. He is always remembered for two things. Firstly as vidwan HK Narasimhamurthy says “Most of the flautists in the Carnatic world would say that at some point of time they have learnt under AV Prakash; such was the quality of his classes and his grammar of teaching.” Secondly he is remembered as the torchbearer of Mali and Ramani style in Karnataka.

Prakash was born into a lower middle class family of musicians with many siblings. The parents strove hard to make both ends meet. His father Ganakalarathna AK Muthanna, a violinist of repute, derived more pleasure in listening to the divine twang of the violin than in collecting fees from his pupils. Vidwan Muthanna played the violin to its glory, till he was a hundred and two years of age.

The family was very rich in music. It was vibrant with the sound of music and discussions about music. HK Narasimhamurthy, a violinist of repute and the brother-in-law of Prakash, traveled down the memory lane in one of his interviews and relived that ambience, replete with music. “The brothers of Prakash named Sridhar and Gopal used to sing. During the evenings usually some musicians came and performed. Sometimes the son of C Rangayya a renowned composer came and sang or Ramachandra another singer of repute performed. The evenings resonated with music. As the night set in, music continued into supper too. All of us used to dine together. Every morsel we ate, had something about music. Supper, which used to begin at 11 pm usually extended up to 1 am. After this Prakash would be in very high spirits and continued to practice till 4 am. Living room, bed



Mysore AV Prakash

room, kitchen and front yard of their house always reverberated with music.” This went a long way in shaping the career of Prakash as a musician.

He developed a very sensitive ear to music. He had wonderful swarajana. He knew vocal music well. He could easily identify any slip in the swara, while others performed. In spite of being so well informed he could not join music classes because his father, despite being a musician himself, never gave him money to pay for fees. In those days fee for six months was one and a quarter rupee. This always made Prakash dream of completing SSLC and get a job somewhere and stand on his own legs. He never had plans of higher education in his life. His wants were very few.

Prakash started playing flute from a very young age and achieved success through diligence, single-mindedness and discipline. He had some basic lessons from vidwan Krishnamurthy otherwise he was self-taught. In one of the interviews he recollected how flute came into his

life. One day he got an iron flute on the road. He told that it came as a boon. On that very day, he tried to find out how to play the seven notes on it. Then he tried all the twenty two notes on his own. He tried to play whatever came to his mind, including film songs. Within a span of three months he was able to play in public. He learnt gamakas on flute by watching others play and especially Mali. He had taken TR Mahalingam as his manasa guru. He learnt the techniques by watching Mali. He used to write down all the notes in Mali’s raga delineation and tried to understand what made Mali different and unique. Then he used to practice it, say almost imitate it. One thing that really teased his imagination was the way Mali produced the Daivatha of Bhairavi Raga. He keenly observed Mali’s blowing and how he controlled his breath. He was extremely fond of Mali, a fondness almost edging on obsession and madness. Mali had never taught him. Mali did not even know that Prakash could play flute. He used to go wherever Mali went and follow him like a shadow. Sometimes he traveled even up to Bombay,



In a deep thought - during a session with flute legend N Ramani

to listen to him and watch him. He had many interesting things to narrate about such tours and also Mali. Sometimes he would be in Bombay but Mali would never turn up. Those were the most difficult times as he had nowhere to go and stay in.

After listening to his flute concert in a wedding, the Manager of State Bank of Mysore offered him a job in the bank. That eased his financial burden to a very great extent. None of the ups and downs of his domestic life came in the way of his pursuit of music. He initiated his children too into music. The elder one AP Srinivas pursued violin, while the younger AP Krishna Prasad preferred flute.

Prakash was a teacher par excellence. He had an untiring spirit. His passion for teaching was unparalleled. His teaching continued up to late night. During weekends he traveled to Hassan and Madikeri to teach the students. He had trained more than 1000 students, including TR Srinath, VK Raman, AP Krishna Prasad, Smitha Srikan, HS Venugopal, KS Jayaram and the popular young duo Hemantha & Heramba. Since four years, his students are continuously winning first prize in the All India Radio music

competitions, which bears a witness to his excellence in teaching. He had an unbound love for them. He was always there to solve their problems and extend a helping hand. One of his senior most students Smitha Srikan told that he was always there to help his students. "Usually during the State Secondary Board music examinations the examiners troubled the candidates, especially instrumentalists for unscientific and irrational reasons. They want the instrumentalists to carry tamboora to the examination center, which is in fact very difficult. Usually instrumentalists take shruti box as it is more convenient. On the day of my examination the same problem cropped up. I was unable to convince the examiner, who was terribly adamant. Coincidentally Prakash sir called me at that very moment to know if everything was alright. I did not want to trouble him by telling the problem as he had just undergone a cardiac surgery. Probably he had guessed by my voice that something had gone wrong. To my surprise he was there at the center within fifteen minutes and set right everything."

He was the most sought after flautist among the dancers. His method of playing flute for dance was very much appreciated by all the



Shri. AV Prakash with his disciples Heramba and Hemantha

In Dr. Ramani's presence, AVP used to keep everyone on their toes at the same time ensuring everybody enjoy the fun...



dancers. His intervention was very unique and heightened the overall impact of the programme. He interspersed the intervals in singing with his emotionally charged playing, which intensified the sthayee bhava of that particular item. This also relieved the singers from singing continuously and broke the monotony. Even today the flautists of his school are preferred by the dancers.

Prakash was a very keen observer and he had many interesting episodes in store. He had his own way of understanding things. He had his own explanation for the eighth hole in Mali's flute. He had many an interesting episodes about Mali. Once Mali was playing at Bidaram Krishnappa Rama Mandira in Mysore. Mysore T Chowdaiah was sitting in a room adjacent to the concert hall. That day Mali was playing *Nagumomu* in Abheri ragam. He played such rare and unique sangatis in *Nagumomu* that Chowdaiah couldn't control himself. He rushed out of the room and saluted Mali and told that

he was no ordinary human being but an incarnation of Lord Krishna himself.

He narrated another incident to drive home the idea that Mali never worried about the audience. Once he was in a mood to play, he played for himself and not for others. During the Ramanavami festivities at the Aralikatte Ramamandira in Mysore, Mali's concert was scheduled. Mali began his concert. Within a few minutes it started drizzling. Within no time there was a heavy downpour. Mali was totally unperturbed. He was completely engrossed in music. He continued to play in his own slow pace, without any botheration whether people were there to listen to his music or not. The music was so enthralling that not a soul moved. People stayed mesmerised by the music of the piper.

Prakash used to say that Mali never practiced complex varieties of rendering swaras at home and then present the readymade stuff in the concert. He always made all calculation extempore, hence he was totally unpredictable and it was possible only for another genius to respond to him. He narrated an incident which, testified to his observation. At the Ramanavami music festival at Chamarajapet, Bangalore, Mali was being accompanied by TN Krishnan and Palghat Mani Iyer. Mali announced that he was eager to play in thrishra as Mani Iyer accompanied him. Mani Iyer too agreed. He played a particular combination of swaras and allowed Mani Iyer to play. Mani Iyer asked Mali to play it again and Mali had to play it nearly four times. Mani Iyer played it only on the fourth time. Then they played the same together and the thrilled audience stood up to pay a standing ovation.

Prakash was called a "Flute Factory," because he had nearly 500 flutes in all the shrutis in his collection and it was almost a museum of flutes. Ramani always admired his passion for collecting flutes. His collection included two or three flutes used by Mali. He had great respect for Ramani. Ramani once heard Prakash playing the flute. He was much impressed by his powerful blowing and sahitya oriented gayaki style. He invited Prakash to play with him. He taught

Prakash a few compositions before the concert and they played them together in the concert.

Prakash told that Ramani wanted to produce on flute all the sangatis sung in vocal. In order to produce the tonic on the flute, one has to cover the holes one, two and seven. In this method a flautist has to struggle very hard to produce certain sangatis sung in vocal. In order to produce them with ease Ramani introduced the use of multiple flute system into flute playing. This method involves the use of flutes of different pitches and with different fingering on each. Then they are merged into the same tonic 'Sa' of the standard flute. This multiple flute system expanded the range of sound on the flute and more than four octaves could be produced with ease. This expanded the boundaries of flute playing itself. There is an interesting incident about the use of multiple flute system.

Once Ramani was demonstrating the use of multiple flutes in lec-dem. Mali was in audience. At the end of the concert Mali appeared before Ramani, and challenged him that everything can be played in one flute itself and he said that he can demonstrate it. Ramani knew that it was not possible, but his gurubhakti made him to say, "Yes sir, it is possible for you to do it, but it is beyond my capacity"

He was associated actively with many music sabhas especially Tyagaraja Sangeetha sabha. In memory of his manasika guru TR Mahalingam, every year he used to organise music programmes. He wanted to make such programmes a permanent feature, so he created an endowment fund in Nadabramhma Sangeetha sabha. He was an ardent admirer of Veena S Balachandar. He instituted an endowment fund to organise a concert in memory of S Balachandar in April, to mark his death anniversary. He placed an endowment of Rs 1,00,000 in Ganabharathi. He took the initiative and fixed the first programme featuring vidushi Jayanthi Kumaresh. It was really unfortunate that he did not live to witness the event.

He received a number of awards and accolades. He received the Best Flautist Award (1987-88) from the Indian Fine Arts Society in Chennai;

Artiste of the Year Award in 2004-05 from The Karnataka Sangeeta Nritya Academy. He was also honoured by the Gayana Samaja, Bengaluru, in 2001-02 by the then Chief Minister SM Krishna. He has been conferred the titles of Kalajyothi and Adarsha Kalavida by the music lovers of Karnataka. He has performed in all the prestigious sabhas of India and abroad. Laxmi Enterprises, Mysuru, has recorded and released a number of cassettes by way of felicitating the grandiose flautist.

On a personal note we do have a few things to share. We were planning a book on Mali for the Ramamala Publications. He was very enthusiastic about the project from the very beginning. He shared his views in a guided listening programme on Mali. When the script was ready, he went through the entire script meticulously and suggested a few corrections and revisions. He wanted to plan the book release differently. In a way he was more enthusiastic than us. All this was exactly a week before his sad demise. He passed away on 17th March at around 8 o'clock and on 10th March at 8 o'clock we were with him at his residence finalising the draft of the book. We miss him very much. His observations have not only enriched the book but also have made the book more interesting.

(Shri. TS Venugopal and Smt. Shylaja have written several books and articles on music and the recent one being the "Bhuvana Bhagya MS" a biography on M. S. Subbulaxmi. Currently they are working on a book on flute maestro Mahalingam. TS Venugopal is a retired Statistics professor and his wife Smt. Shylaja who supports him in his writing, is a lecturer of English at Government First Grade College, Nanjangud Mysore)

Ghatam Suresh on Guru Mani

Ghatam Suresh Vaidyanathan

During mid-seventies, my fellow students and I, all in our teens, were in awe just looking at the charisma of Mani sir whenever he occasioned to visit his guru Sri Thethakudi R Hariharasharma, a direct disciple of Tanjore Sri Vaidyanathalyer. Clad in pure White dothi and half slack, with a dark complexion topped by long tresses and flowing beard, Mani sir had been carrying a distinct formidable personality even then. We, the bubbly boys would undergo an additional disciplining session “to behave”, the previous day to look “orderly” during his visit.

Harihara Sharma sir always looked forward to such visits of this young star disciple of his who was creating waves in the Carnatic music scene then. Mani sir would have brief chats with the gurus that included Sri KM Vaidyanathan, hardly noticing the excited brats in the corner of that small hall. One can imagine the swift excitement of a Rajinikanth movie scene to visualise this sight.

I had never dreamt then that I would be one day fortunate to share the stage with him and later endorsed by him perpetually and even openly declared as “numero uno in classical

ghatam playing. Incidentally the very first official appearance with him on stage for Sri. DK Jayaraman was a gift from my guru Dr. TV Gopalakrishnan who organised that very special concert just for me.

Mridangam despite its predominant and inevitable position as percussion to Carnatic music has been facing dominance from the center performers who were seniors and stalwarts in those days. Mani sir has been exhibiting focused, robust performance with a stubborn stage presence and pristine pure soulful strokes with impeccable new mathematical concepts that astounded many co-artists by his sheer style. Needless to say, any concert was rising to unimaginable heights of ecstasy with his mridangam support. Unbeknownst, and at times very vocal, he has been paving way for prominence and dignity to the instrument that continues to give a honourable status to the next generation in mridangam playing.

Not many would dare speak about the setbacks, misgivings and advises received during career building but would hide them out of present position and superiority complex. Mani sir had





Australian Art Orchestra with Sruthilaya

been keeping his book wide open to share such experiences during his speeches and interviews which shows his confidence and honesty.

Every co-artiste would have volumes of experiences to share, but a few stand above all. It needs a certain level of maturity to handle his ideas. A co-percussionist cannot take the compositions for granted and treat them with “let’s see on stage” attitude. The greatest advantage Mani sir volunteers to offer is a few practice sessions, particularly for special occasions that would prevent ambiguity in responding and co-performing.

But again, his spirit of strokes, formation of phrases and concept of forms and accents need to be keenly observed and followed. For artistes like me, such sessions opened up new galaxies to explore and practice with added intense to impress him on the next immediate opportunity. We always witness an exhilarated audience to such a perfectly executed, evenly poised presentation. Disciplined, intelligent accompaniment, organised, waste less performance, stage decorum are Mani Sir’s hallmark.

Honesty towards rhythm and audience is very unique to Mani sir. This anecdote needs special mention. A major accident in early 1993 kept

him totally away from his dear mridangam for more than six months. But his will power surprised doctors whose advice he defied and started working on his mridangam despite excruciating pain on the right hand which had plates and bolts inside. We were scheduled to go on a tour of Germany with seven concerts in a row.

As much as he strained for hours every day to bring back his touches on mridangam, he insisted that all the seven percussion ensemble concerts have to be distinctly structured though the audience were comprised of only Europeans and the venues were different each day. He made Harishankar, me and TR Sundaresan sit through practice sessions to device and execute seven different ensembles. I recently happened to meet the organiser of that tour of 1993, who vividly remembers Mani sir’s sincerity even decades later. All through the two and half decades of my proximity to him sharing many a prestigious stages, I have never seen decline in his sincerity.

Mani sir is gifted with this extra analytical and creative brain that cared for variety, orderliness, logic in every composition. This demanded long practice sessions and focus for perfect execu-

tion. His steadfastness even during ill health and professional distractions is enviable. He would shy away from listeners' encomiums and social gatherings to make the best of his time with his love, the Mridangam.

Anyone who has moved with him closely as a co-musician, organiser and friend would endorse wholeheartedly for his magnanimity, enviable hard work, perfection and focus. I have seen him diplomatically avoiding customary post-concert parties on numerous occasions. His only reason every time was, the party is in honour of the players. We have done nothing except benefiting stardom by playing on the divine instrument. All honours should go only to the instrument. Mridangam is above the performer - A very profound theory indeed.

Talking from co-percussionist's point of view, his high expectations from a co-artiste do have great benefits. They grow musically, mature in their thoughts on laya, and rise in respectful status in the music society. Mani sir is very large hearted in allowing such growth through his insistence of high standards and quality playing. The proportion he wants the co-artiste to take to balance and retort is very rare to see in a society where insecurity easily sets in.

His way of remunerating co-artistes when he leads the show needs special mention. He is a very magnanimous leader who believes in genuine proportions in fee and happiness of co-musicians. He would go on to share his own honorarium with musicians who work for Govt institutions like All India Radio (like Harishankar, TV Vaasan) when they are scheduled to perform "on duty". Looking after the comforts of co-musicians in terms of food, stay and travel while out of home, particularly abroad is very unique to Mani sir.

On occasions when he had to speak on his work, Mani sir always declares, classical music is for class people. According to him, classical music is for elevation, spiritual experience and not entertainment, fun and mass appeal. I have seen this meticulously followed even when he works with fusion and Jazz musicians.

A rare percussionist who has incredibly large following in style and compositions world over, Mani sir is iconic and a gene of a trend setter in South Indian percussion.

SV Sahana (Mysore), HS Sudhindra and Srisailam at SRLKM



Tavil

Dr. BM Sundaram, Musicologist

Our Bharata desa has the greatness of having a number of musical instruments, though many of them are now extinct. Works on music classify musical instruments as Tanthi (Stringed), Sushira (Wind), Avanaddha (Percussive made of wood and leather) and Kamsya (Brass). Among them Sushira (Nagasvaram, Flute etc.) and Avanaddha (Tavil, Mrudangam, Kanjira etc.) gained prominence. The percussive instruments have been used on various occasions and in various places to keep rhythm of music perfect. In the Karnatic system, most of these are used only to accompany the melodic path of music, while some of them have contributed immensely to the development of arithmetical permutations and combinations. Nagasvaram and Tavil have a unique part in the development of Karnatic music. The South Indian temples are to be proud in having a variety of instruments, both melodic and rhythmic particularly the Nagasvaram and Tavil. These two came up for musical service in temples, in the beginning of history and later used for various auspicious occasion and events. We cannot certainly say when the Nagasvaram came into existence. Some early works on music mention this was quiet in existent, even during the Rig Vedic Times. One Tamil work says, "Rukku vedattile ninrezhu nagasvarattin totram...". Later it gained a number of names like "Uttaala Venu" (vertical flute). On the basis of scholarly research, we could certainly say that Tavil, the percussive, was born with Nagasvaram and these two were used for Temple services. Now let us see about this great percussive instrument, Tavil, which has served with unimaginable rhythmic wonders.

Old works on musicology say that this instrument was discovered by Ravana, King of Lanka, to wake up the sleeping Kumbhakarna (kumbhakaarnasya bodhaartham Raavanena vinirmitam). The name of this instrument, perhaps at that time was Dindima. In the Vaishnavite Agamas like 'Sree Prasna Samhita', this has been

mentioned as Maddukam. As said earlier, this has been in use as the prime accompaniment to Nagasvaram, since very early times. In many Kannada and Telugu works, this has been given the name Dolu, which later got changed to Tavil. We find the name Dolu in many Persian works too. 'Dolu', in general, means 'hanging from the shoulder' or 'a swing'. The term Tavil is found first used in Saint Arunagirinathar's Tiruppugazh (Muzhavu valai bheri kanapparai Tavil). In a very early Tamil work also we find the usage (Tan-numai Tavil Tadari). The Tamil word 'Tavil', when split, gives the meaning as, 'Ta' (blemish) and 'il' (without). So, Tavil simply means 'a blemishless instrument'.

In the making of Tavil, jackwood that reverberates the temple bell's sound is most preferable and even today only this wood is used. Goat's skin for one side (Valantalai) and buffalo's skin for the other side (the idantalai or Toppi) is found to be used. The valantalai or the side played by finger is named 'Vandodari' and the other side as 'Gundodari' in earlier tamil works. But, both these names have gone with the wind and only Valantalai and Toppi have come to stay. This is the only percussive instrument that has eleven 'eyes' (holes to insert leather straps to tighten). They represent 'Ekadasa Rudra' (perhaps this was a discovery of Ravana, a devotee of Lord Shiva).

The basic syllables for Tavil are seven, like the Sapta Swaras, - "Ta dhi tom nam ki ta jham". Another uniqueness of this instrument is the syllables are produced only at the particular spot. Even while playing at an incredible Speed, the syllables are to be counted only at the exact spots, as taught during the primary lessons. For instance, mridangam, syllable, 'Dhi' is played on the right side (valantalai), during the initial lessons, but while executing the same in a fast tempo, it sounded on the Toppi too.

In this way also, Tavil has a unique place. Tavil is called 'Yemabheri' in Sri Lanka, since before the flag hoisting for any festival in the temples, this instrument is taken to the cremation ground (an abode of Lord Siva!) and performed pujas by Temple priest, who will carry it on his shoulder, sounding 'Tom' on the Toppy with the stick and later handed over to the original Tavil player. Then only the temple flag will be hoisted. Perhaps this is the reason for the prayers to begin the sounding of the Tavil with the syllable 'Tom' (*Totom tom tom tom*) on any occasion.

It is quite common in a Nagaswara ensemble, Nagaswara is the main instrument, it begins only with the playing of the Tavil. This is the tradition, which cannot be found in any vocal or instrumental concert, around the globe. Only after the song is commenced, the percussive instrument joins the main performer and accompanies. But this unique tradition, Tavil the percussive instrument, par excellence should lead the Nagaswara ensemble (Melam) cannot be found anywhere else. By the way, there is a wrong usage of the term 'Melam' to Tavil. The Tavil player is described as 'Melakkaran' by many commoners. 'Melam' is nothing but a 'union' (The Sanskrit root 'mil' denotes 'joining', 'uniting' etc.). So, any group or musical ensemble is a 'Melam'.

Some other instruments like the Mrudanga have a pitch value and hence a short syllable, for instance, 'jham' or 'Dhin' is pleasant to hear, whereas it is not possible in the case of the Tavil. Hence, to attract the listeners, the Tavil player has to start his playing and introducing the arithmetic even at the outset. Usually, he starts with "Totom tom tom toto tom tom tom tata tata..." and while ending that phrase, he introduces Gati Bhedam, "tomtom kita tomtomtomta tam" (Trayasra gati) or a phrase in some other gati. Here the introduction of the Tavil play has arithmetical usage. Only after playing on the Tavil for few minutes, the Nagasvaram enters the scene. Even if the Nagasvaram player is ready, he will wait for the Tavil play and then only begin.

Tavil, though an 'Asura Vadya' is very tender. There are certain disciplines observed, as far as

this instrument is concerned. No woman, in general, or particularly one in her monthly periods is allowed to go near the instrument (she need not touch the instrument) in the player's house, when he has to work or during the tightening of the leather straps on that instruments for a concert. If such a thing happens, immediately the leather or the Valantalai or the Toppi will tear off. Similarly, none is allowed to stand on one leg, keeping the other leg on the nearby wall, particularly when the leather straps are tightened, and in that case too the same calamity will follow. That's why the Tavil is praised as the 'blemish-less' and tender.

The contribution of the Tavil to the arithmetical side of rhythmic play being the 'margadarsi' to other percussive instrument is also phenomenal. Today, we find many mrudangam players, for that matter, going on 'unloading' heaps of 'Vyavaharam' (arithmetical executions) during the so called, 'Tani'. Some do that even between Pallavi and Anupallavi or Charana, during the singing of the vocalist or instrumental playing. Tavil is the 'path-blower' for this. Since this instrument is pitchless, the Tavil player is compelled to introduce arithmetics, whereas it is not so in the case of Mrudangist. Hence we may jolly well assert and aver that arithmetics in the execution of the rhythmic phrases is a contribution of the Tavil player. If we boast today, that the rhythmic part of the Carnatic Music is at the highest level, enviable for other percussive instruments of the world, the credit should go to none other than the Tavil players.



Dr. BM Sundaram is respectfully called Best Musicologist Sundaram and has a passion for research in music. He commands high level of respect in the music fraternity and has written several books on Music.

He was actively involved in the Thyagabrahma Sabha of Thanjavur and is a very busy man today. We are grateful to Dr. BM Sundaram to have provided his thoughts on this topic. We look forward to being associated with him continuously for the benefit of our readers.

Tanjavur Shankara Iyer: A Friend, Philosopher and Guide

'Isai Peroli' Vidwan Neyveli R. Santhanagopalan



Many years ago I attended a great vidwan's concert and was returning home on my two wheeler. The person in whose enjoyable company I had attended the kacheri was on the pillion seat. Suddenly a fearsome buffalo appeared directly in our path. My pillion rider felt it was Yama's mount itself. He began chanting Lord Rama's name for protection. After reaching home he was inspired to compose a song extolling the power of the Lord's name to ward off any adversity that confronts us ('*edhu vandhu nammai edirtha podhum*'). Sung widely since then, the kriti is 'Madhura, Madhura Sri Rama Namam' in raga Kharaharapriya. My pillion rider that day was none other than the great musician, composer, teacher and human being Tanjavur Shankara Iyer.

My first meeting with Shankara Iyer had happened a few years earlier to this incident. I was

in my mid-twenties then. I was doing my regular practice. Apparently, he had heard my singing and walked in, dressed immaculately in white. He introduced himself simply as Shankaran with what I came to recognise later as his innate humility. He then said, 'You are doing '*asura sadhakam*', do some '*deva sadhakam*' also!'. He then picked up my tambura and sang the composition, 'Sankari Neevani Ninnu' in raga Begada. To this day I have not forgotten the depth with which he articulated the *rishabha* in the *chittai swaram* of that kriti. As an aside, I can mention here that for a long time beginning with this first visit, Shankara Iyer sang only raga Begada at our home, leaving my mother to wonder if he knew at all of any other ragam!

From that day Shankara Iyer became a friend, philosopher and guide to me. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that it was through him that I truly discovered the greatness of my own guru Sangeetha Kalanidhi TN Sheshagopalan Sir with whom I had just then completed my *gurukulavasam*. Such was Shankara Iyer's generous temperament that he took me under his fold and opened to me his vast store of knowledge.

Shankara Iyer's gurus were Sattur Krishna Iyengar and Tiger Varadachariar. With his contemporaries (and later Carnatic stalwarts) TK Murthy Sir and TM Tyagarajan, Shankara Iyer used to discuss and analyse music for long hours every day for many years at the home of the legendary Tanjavur Vaidyanatha Iyer. For someone so passionately engaged in the art form, it was perhaps natural to be disillusioned by the predominance of *tukkadas* in *kacheris* of that time. He left music and opened a petty shop where one day somebody came with old recordings to sell. Among those recordings was the Begada Varnam rendered by the great Veena Dhanammal. Listening to her music revived his interest



in Carnatic music, and thankfully for all of us, there was no looking back.

In my interaction with him I always felt that Shankara Iyer had the rare wisdom to distinguish between things which can be changed and things which must not be. I remember him fervently urging me not to change, even unintentionally during a concert, the specific *sangatis* he taught me in the Tyagaraja Swami *kriti* 'Teliyaleru Rama'. This was so because he had researched and discovered the traditional origins of these phrases and wanted to keep them as they were.

His loyalty to tradition did not hinder his creativity. I remember many sessions with him where he encouraged me to try *kalpana swarams* using the *sarale varasais* as the *pallavi*. At other times we would take up a line for *neraival* and expand that into a *ragamalika* spanning several *ragams*.

To me, Shankara Iyer is the greatest composer of our times after the great Papanasam Sivan. For example, consider his 'Balasubrahmanya' in raga Vishnupriya; I think it is a pioneering composition in a rare ragam. Or think of 'Rama Namame Tudi' in Desh; I feel that while Mutuswami Dikshitar brought to Carnatic music many *ragams* from the Hindustani system, per-

haps he left Desh to be explored by the genius of Shankara Iyer. His *kriti* in raga Natakapriya, 'Geetha Vadya Natana' is another classic. A lakshana *kriti* in hamsanadam is a tribute to his ability to be immensely creative within the framework of traditional rules.

I must mention here that when Shankara Iyer's 'Mahadeva Shiva Shambho' was sung before Maha-Periyava (Sri Sri Chandrashekharendra Saraswati of Kanchi), that great saint with his intuition felt that Shankara Iyer had composed the song for the greater benefit of mankind. In fact, the composition was Shankara Iyer's fervent plea to the lord to save Chennai from the high tidal waves that threatened to cause damage and suffering.

Even in *ragams* where there are famous compositions by the Trinity and other renowned *vaggeyakaras*, Shankara Iyer has carved his own path. If we contrast his 'Natajanapalini Nalinakanti' in ragam Nalinakanti, we see that he begins strongly on the *gandharam* as contrasted with Tyagaraja Swami's 'Manavayalagincharadate' which emphasises the *madhyamam*. Similarly, his composition in Mohanam 'Ganapatiye Undan' contains the sweet essence of Mohana which is ideal for the novice to learn the ragam and the



Tanjavur Sri. Sankara Iyer being felicitated. Also seen in the picture are Dr. Sundar, Chitravina Ravikiran, Umayalapuram Mali

experienced artist to present before an audience. All his compositions have a common feature – on the one hand the *sahityam* is easy, and on the other the *ragabhavam* is maximum. They are highly versatile and can be presented in a variety of contexts. Nadaswaram vidwans have almost made his compositions like ‘Ranjanimala’ their own.

No account of Shankara Iyer is complete without reference to his sense of humour. I never heard him speak ill of anyone. But if he wanted to convey the message he could do so humorously. Once a lady who wished to learn from him boasted of her knowledge of twenty five kritis in raga Bhairavi. Smilingly he admonished her saying she could no doubt sing all those kritis in the one kind of Bhairavi she knew, but did she know the varieties of Bhairavi which were hidden in them?

I think of Shankara Iyer as a bridge between the old and the new in Carnatic music. His personal familiarity with stalwarts of yesteryears makes him a repository of priceless anecdotes and knowledge about their music. A lifelong bachelor, he continues to sing with the same involvement and passion even now in his nineties. He wants Carnatic music to always flourish and

scale newer heights. He is keen that Carnatic musicians excel in singing across three *sthayis*. He is like a cool breeze that brings with it the fragrance of many flowers and gives joy and soothes the mind.

Recently I asked him what motivates him to sing at such a ripe age. His reply shall always be an inspiration to me. He said, “I am searching constantly for that ‘absolute music’ which is capable of being understood and enjoyed not just by all humankind, but also by all other living beings and even inanimate objects.”

I pray to the almighty that he should live for many more years and share his knowledge and wisdom with every generation.

(Our humble gratitude to Neyveli Shri. R. Santanagopalan Sir for having taken time to provide his thoughts on living legend Tanjavur Sankara Iyer. We are really fortunate to have got his time considering he is one of the busiest musician. Our thanks are also due to SA Karthik, a corporate lawyer and a disciple of Neyveli sir for the excellent support rendered towards this article. Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira is ever grateful to both).

Saint Thyagaraja, A musical play

Rajashree Yogananda

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira was blessed with the opportunity to host a musical drama on the life of Saint Thyagaraja on 9th April 2016 at Gayana Samaja. Sri V Srinivasan, music critic and writer, popularly known as VSV has written the script and screen play based on the biographical work on the Saint. As destined, TV Varadhara-jen's United Visuals has joined hands with VSV and renowned Carnatic musician Bombay Jayashri Ramnath to stage the play. She has aptly chosen the kritis befitting the situations on the stage and recorded the kritis along with other artistes so that the troupe could carry the music wherever they went to enact the life story – a life full of trials and tribulations, of profound and unflinching bhakthi towards Lord Rama, a life full of unparalleled creativeness as he is supposed to have written and composed 2400 kritis (though only a 1000 are available to us now) an unassuming life where money, power and fame never had a place, a life, an example worth emulating - the life of one of the greatest composer saints of our time- Sri Thyagaraja.

The Play begins showing Thyagaraja practising unchavritti or bhiksha (*'Jagadaananda karaka'* being played in the background) for a living and the disinterest in materialistic wealth. This leads to immense displeasure as expressed by his brother and his wife as they want him to forgo the unchavritti which he practises and to make the best use of his music for materialistic comforts. Thyagaraja feels that his singing is because of his parents blessings and Lord Rama's anugraham. Thyagaraja answers and tells them that there is difference between pichai and bhikshai. Pichai is what we get to fulfil the hunger whereas bhikshai is given in the name of the divine which goes beyond hunger integrating both the receiver and giver with the Lord. It stops being mere saadam(food) and becomes prasaadam (food after offering to the God). He also tells them the difference between soukhyam and

santosham. His answer is that the former is related to the bodily comforts whereas the later is related to the mind- mental comforts.

The play depicts the close knit family of Thyagaraja where his wife Kamalu and daughter Seethamma are shown as perfect foil to Thyagaraja's ideologies. Thyagaraja also clarifies the doubts raised by his daughter Seethamma and tells her that in namasankeerthanam, unlike classical music one can start singing with devotion while going about each one's daily routine. To another question raised by his daughter, he explains that though Rama was a king, he lived like a common man with lofty values making him Purushottama. Heeding to a request by his daughter, to sing in praise of mother Seetha, Thyagaraja composes and sings '*Maa Jaanaki chetta battaga*' in *Kambodhi* where he praises mother Seetha saying that Rama attained greatness because he married Seetha.

Another episode of Saint Thyagaraja's life depicted in the play is when sage Narada comes to Thyagaraja's house in the guise of a Brahmin and requests him to keep his belongings while he goes to river Cauvery for the usual ablution. The Brahmin never turns up. Narada appears in his dreams and tells him that he has been mesmerised by Thyagaraja's music and that is what drew him to his house with the divine instrument- Veena as a gift. Narada tells him that it is his responsibility to make people become aware of the greatness of music and that he would be called "Thyaga Brahma" by the people. Overcome with emotion, Thyagaraja sings '*Naarada muni vedalina*' in *Pantuvrali* - singing Naarada's great qualities like always chanting the name of lord Narayana, meditating upon his lotus feet and his philosophical nature.

Once Gopalakrishna Bharathi visits the house of Thyagaraja and the saint expresses a desire to listen to him sing the raga *abhogi*. Inspired by

Sri Thyagaraja extolling the virtues of Lord Rama to his family



the surroundings and the Rama idol in Thyagaraja's house he sings '*sabhaapathikku vere daivam samaanamaaguma*' in Tamil. Thyagaraja is overjoyed as he has never been able to write a kriti in Tamil; at the same time he feels that both Shiva and Parvathi themselves had said that chanting 'Rama nama' thrice with devotion is equivalent to singing it a thousand times and sings '*Raamanee samaanamevaru*' in *kharahara-priya*.

Another event depicted in the play, is when the king Sarabhoji Maharaj conducted a festival where no artiste from his kingdom was willing to participate for fear that they could never compete with another well-known artiste from the neighbouring kingdom. At the behest of his guru, Thyagaraja sings at the festival oblivious to any other thought other than singing for Rama, elevating his music to a higher plane. The other artiste, humbled, very graciously concedes defeat. Elated the king sends gifts to his house with the request that he should become the *asthana vidwan* and that he should sing a song in praise of the king. Thyagaraja declines the offer and the gifts saying that he can never sing in praise of any human being after being a *bhakta* of Rama and that his tongue can only sing in Lord's praise. He sings '*nidhi chaala sukhamaa*

Raamuni sannidhi seva sukhamaa' in *Kalyani* Meaning – which is more satisfying? *Nidhi* (wealth) or service in the presence of Rama.

The king angry with the snub passes an order that henceforth no one in his kingdom could offer *bhiksha* to Thyagaraja. His brother and his wife are also angry for his refusal to be a sycophant of the king and turns him and his family away from the house.

At this juncture, Lord Rama along with Seetha, Lakshmana and Hanuman in the guise of pilgrims requests him to allow them to stay at their place for some time. Thyagaraja is happy that he has been given an opportunity to serve them. The king later realises his mistake towards Thyagaraja, as he is afflicted with a severe stomach ailment which cannot be cured by any of the physicians. He realises that it is due to depriving Thyagaraja of his *bhiksha*. The king humbly requests Thyagaraja for forgiveness and offers to conduct the marriage of his daughter *Seethamma*.

The play depicts another very important event in the life of Thyagaraja through which the world comes to know about his musical genius. Lord Rama who has been residing in the house of Thyagaraja in the guise of a pilgrim wills that



King Sarabhoji is full of repentance and asks for Thyagaraja's forgiveness

the world should know about this genius of a person who is happy to be in oblivion and the only happiness for him is to be in the company of his Rama idol. The idols are stolen from his home one fine day and Thyagaraja is in a state of disbelief, grief stricken and in profound shock. Thyagaraja vents out his intense emotion of grief by composing many kritis. He decides to go in search of his Rama idol and requests his wife to pray and await his return. In his search he goes to various punya kshetrams like Sri Rangam, kanchi, Tirupathi and many more. While in Tirupathi to have the darshan of Lord Srinivasa the screen is drawn and he is unable to have the darshan. Thyagaraja starts singing 'Therathiyagaradha' in Gowlipantu requesting the Lord to peel away the layers of kama, krodha, moha, lobha, madha and matsaryam residing in him and at the same time pleading him to give the darshan by removing the screen.

The final episode of Thyagaraja's life is that when Lord appears before him in his dream and requests him to return home saying that the

idols would arise from river Cauvery near his place and he could be united with it. A very poignant moment in the play is when a visibly aged Thyagaraja is shown, very frail, going about his routine. He gets a call from Lord Rama that he would join him on Pushya Bahula Panchami day when he would shed his mortal remains. Sri Thyagaraja accepts sanyasam and on the tenth day after the calling, he departs to join his beloved Rama who is there with Seetha, Lakshmana, Bharatha, Shatrugna and Anjaneya.

The play ends with the singing of 'endaro mahanubhavulu'.

Very tightly written script with not a word or conversation out of place, the involvement of the artistes depicting all the characters in the play, the background music, the kritis chosen for singing, the lighting, the props with very minute details and the involvement of everyone concerned made watching of the play a truly sublime experience.

From Bamboo to Veṇu...

Shailesh Ramamurthy

Along with vocal music, various instruments used in Carnatic music have become inseparable from the psyche of Carnatic rasikas, owing to the monumental contribution of various maestros who have performed on these instruments, gurus responsible for propagation of invaluable techniques and musical content, and of course a galaxy of great composers. Offering salutations to these greats (“*Endaro Mahanubhavulu Andariki Vandanamu ...*”), this article moves on to a lesser explored aspect - the making of a Carnatic flute (Veṇu), along with some associated information on the flute.

Unbroken continuity in the fundamental form of the instrument:

For over the last century, the flute has been featured as one of the lead instruments in the current form of Carnatic music performances. It is very interesting to note that detailed descriptions of the Carnatic flute have been included in the *Silappadikaram*, circa 2nd century CE. The flute (*kuzhal*), frequently mentioned in *Silappadikaram*, led the music orchestra, with *yaazh* and other instruments following it. Dr S Ramanathan, in his research on “Music in *Silappadikaram*”, notes that the fingering system and design is similar to the one that generally prevails to this day in the south Indian flute! It has been said that of the 8 finger/tone holes, using two closed fingers used to produce *kural* (equivalent of the present *shadj*) and sounding the notes one by one using the tone holes yields *cempaalai* (which is equivalent to the scale of *harikambhoji* of present times). Flutists will immediately recognise how this readily applies to the present day Carnatic flute with 8 tone/finger holes and signifies an unbroken continuity. On a related note but from a different treatise, in the narration of the 63 Nayanmars in the *Periya Puranam* by Sekkizhar, detailed description of the flute playing of Anaya Nayanar finds special mention. Indeed, in the sculpt-

ed depiction of the 63 Nayanmars in Shiva temples, the iconography of the flute-playing Anayar is very similar to Lord Krishna (Venugopala). The relevant verse of *Periya Puranam* also talks of how the chosen bamboo needed to be transformed into the flute. Both the *Silappadikaram* and the *Periya Puranam* prescribe measurements used in crafting the instrument!

The instrument

The Indian bamboo flute consists of an embouchure hole (through which the player blows into the instrument) and tone holes. In the Indian flute, the contact between the player's fingers and the holes allows for partial hole closure to varying degrees and glides between notes to be effected (in conjunction with embouchure control), which are essential for *gamakas*, so important to our classical music. The flute used in present Carnatic music uses 8 tone holes. On a related note for completeness, it has been reported that some carnatic flutists in the early part of 20th century used flutes with seven holes, with of course the same basic tuning. Natural node (or cork in some cases) physically closes one end of the flute. Acoustically, the bamboo flute acts as a tube open on both ends - the embouchure hole acts as an open end acoustically. Overblowing (increasing the pressure of air blown) results in the second register or higher octave notes. Flutes of specific pitches are made from bamboos of chosen length and inner diameter of the bamboo piece (also referred to as bore diameter subsequently in this article), the length and bore diameter associated with the specific pitches as per flute design. The picture of a finished carnatic flute has been depicted later in this article.

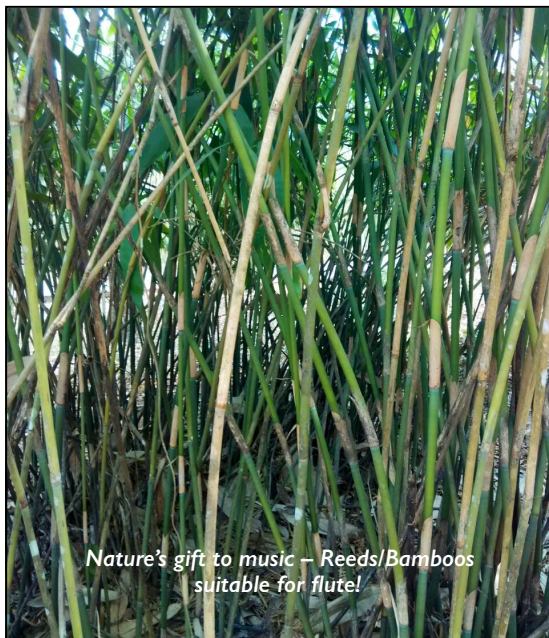
Crafting of the instrument

A well-made instrument is a key enabler to heightened expression of lofty musical ideas and masterpieces on the instrument. Flute making

perhaps involves simpler tools and processes compared to the making some other musical instruments but requires a lot of attention to details in fine-tuning the instrument in multiple ways. Flute making transcends being a technique and science – it is an art. Using the fundamental form of the instrument, some performers do make small customisations to suit their playing preferences and blowing style when they get their specific instruments made. Some parameters that can be customised to players' preferences include ratio of length to inner-diameter of bamboo, wall thickness, hole sizes, and specific hole placement aspects. Ideally, a synergistic association between the flute-maker and a professional artiste enables such customisations.

Bamboo/Reed used:

While bansuris used in the north typically use Assam bamboo, the Carnatic flutes typically use reeds majorly found in the western ghat locally referred to as *Eeth*. (In recent times, some artistes have also been using south Indian style flutes crafted using Assam bamboos.) It is said that *Travancorica ochlandra* is very suitable for carnatic flutes. Such reeds have adequate internode lengths and good volume. Carefully chosen pieces, with the right wall thickness,



sufficiently mature but not completely ossified, will potentially have a good tone and volume. There is typically variation in the quality of tone within the same species, and a fraction of the chosen bamboos turn out with rich tone fulfilling the tonality desired by an expert flutist. Mature pieces of bamboos that are harvested are typically further dried for a few months. The time of harvesting is chosen to minimise the amount of saccharide or sugar content in the harvested bamboo. Some flute makers follow the additional step of immersing the pieces under water for some time to remove excess of saccharides, to avoid pest infestation later, while other makers do not follow this step.

Heat-treatment:

Carnatic flutes generally use heat-treatment of bamboos which improves the tone in case of many bamboos. After the mature bamboo has been oiled, a medium flame on the torch is used for heat treatment, the torch typically moved back and forth on surface of bamboo.



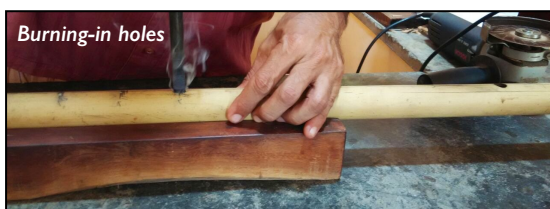
Designing and making the hole-layout:

The broad layout of holes is based on acoustic principles. The distance of the first open tone hole to the embouchure hole determines the musical length, with some correction factors at work, and determines the frequency of the note

being played. The carnatic flute also has some special design aspects vis-à-vis the common, simpler diatonically tuned folk style flutes. These design aspects enable smooth transitions between first and second register (corresponding to *gaandhaara-madhyama* region in typical carnatic fingering of 2-finger-closed shadja). While simpler bamboo flutes used in folk music have a frequency discontinuity or break between the last note of the first register and the first note of the second register, the 8 hole carnatic flute ushers in significant frequency continuity between/around these terminal points of the registers by way of its design. Also, there are small differences in preferences in the way different schools want the design to be implemented in a manner that combines well with some of the specific playing techniques used by the school, which informs in small changes in design.

The holes are carefully marked according to the distances designed for the frequency of individual notes, and of course, the specific pitch the flute is targeted for.

The tone-holes are burned-in rather than drilled. Burning-in holes seals the edges of the tone-holes more effectively and does not expose any fibrous portion of the bamboo. Burning rods of carefully calibrated diameters are used for the purpose. Initially the holes are



made smaller than what the typical final sizes as per design would typically turn out to be, and then slowly enlarged during the fine-tuning process of the instrument. Since every bamboo is different and has small variations in its inner bore profile (as opposed to say a machined profile of a hypothetical factory made tube!), the design serves as a guideline and starting point, over which the flute maker applies his knowl-



Giving final touches to the burning-in of embouchure

edge and art while fine-tuning the diameters of the holes to target the musical pitch.

A lesser explored aspect even among flutists and flute makers is the positive way the taper in the node section of a typical carnatic flute benefits octave balance if intelligently used. The flute making process in the west, among other aspects, has focused on making the head of a flute tapered or contracted for the octaves to be in tune. Boehm, the inventor of the Boehm flute talks of this need.

What is octave balance? Lack of octave balance can make the higher octave note sound flatter. It should be noted that octave balance is also dependent on another related factor, viz how close the embouchure hole is, with respect to the node/cork, but there is a limiting case - making the embouchure hole almost abutting the node/cork can affect the tone of the highest notes of the second register and the felicity of playing them. It has been shown that cylindrical bores without taper result in flatter higher octaves.

It is very interesting to note that good Carnatic flutes are able to employ the node taper to obtain excellent octave balance. The node taper is nature's gift that enables good Carnatic flutes with the beneficial effects that the machined tapered head a western flute uses! To illustrate the node taper that enables octave balance, a sliced bamboo to show the profile of a cross section of a node has been depicted. Of course, a node flute is slightly more complex to make than a cork flute in that once the embouchure hole is made, its position with respect to the



node closure cannot be changed easily to correct any octave balance issues (while a cork can be moved to find the sweet-spot). Even if a cork flute is made rather than a node flute, a skilled flute maker can use the said taper of the bamboo near the node to get good octave balance.

On a related note, many Hindustani bansuri players (though not all) have been playing with purely cylindrical bores without taper and have compensated for the octave by means of blowing techniques they evolve finely as they learn. Also, a higher ratio between length and the bore's inner diameter that is generally found in bansuri also partially alleviates the octave-issue of a cylindrical bore.

Tuning and finishing

After cleaning the burned-in holes, the process of careful tuning begins. This is a relatively in-



A finished carnatic flute

tense process where the maker carefully plays each note and makes minor adjustments to the hole sizes to get the intonation (pitch of each note produced) on target. Some makers patiently perform this fine-tuning in multiple passes, also in the process, waiting for the bamboo to slightly cool down and settle in temperature after burning-in, as well as, for the flute maker's blowing to be natural and relaxed without inadvertently adjusting the blowing to force the notes in tune! Another interesting aspect is that every flutist blows the flute slightly differently, which could cause a small variation in the overall pitch between the maker (as he fine-tunes the instrument) and the player. In case of custom made instruments, the flute maker calibrates for this aspect, especially in cases there are stringent requirements on the absolute pitch of the instrument being crafted (e. g. $A_4=440$ Hz).

The flute maker relies on artistic instinct to enhance the voice of each newly crafted flute

by making informed decisions and tweaks to the embouchure hole. After making all the fine-tuning tweaks, the flute is thoroughly cleaned and oiled internally. Some makers also polish the surface of the instrument in different ways.

In a few weeks to few months of playing, the sound opens up further - also called breaking-in of the instrument in the west. The responsiveness and tonality gradually get enhanced due to some natural processes believed to be at work. Also, the flutist also gets closely familiar with the flute's characteristics in this period, this synergy contributing to the enhancement in another way.

In summary, flute making is an art rather than an assembly-line implementation of a cast-in-stone design. The flute maker's knowledge and experience plays a major role in the success of making a flute. Flutists know the value of a well-crafted flute, without which their deep musical knowledge and techniques may not find complete expression. Hence, flute-making is respected as an esoteric and traditional art, which combines well with innovative and analytical skills, discerning intelligence and patience of the flute-maker. Well crafted flutes, quite simple in its construction and appearance compared to other instruments, are capable of filling every part of a chamber or hall with a warm and rich sound even without amplification. They also warm the cockles of the *rasikas'* hearts since the flutist can present, with resonance, tonality and sruti-alignment, renditions spanning an entire spectrum - gamaka-laden carnatic ragas (like Todi, Bhairavi, Sahana and Dhanyasi), to other lilting ragas and melodies, to meditative music on bass flutes.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Mr Krishnaraj Bayar, flute-maker, for many of the photos that find place in this article.

(About the author: The author is a flutist and vocal music practitioner, also deeply interested in researching musicological aspects. An awardee of the prestigious President Dr Shanker Dayal Sharma Gold Medal from IIT Kharagpur, he is a signal and video processing specialist. He has also been closely working with flute makers).

OST on Guru Karaikudi Mani

Sachi R Sachidananda

I know Guru Karaikudi Mani for the past five decades. I met him first in 1964 at the residence of his guru, Vid. T. R. Harihara Sharma (father of ghatam maestro TH Vinayakram), at No.5, Pillayar Koil Street, Triplicane. On that day, I sang and Vid. Mani accompanied me.

One thing that I cannot forget in my life is that Vid. Mani introduced me to Vid. TM Thyagarajan, in 1984, and recommended to him to take me as his student. Thereafter, I was under my guru Sangeetha Kalanidhi TM Thyagarajan till his death. Vid. Mani was wholly responsible for this fortuitous development in my musical career. Vid. Mani continues to strongly believe that a vocalist should learn under a vocalist, a mridangist under a mridangist, and a violinist under a violinist.

Vid. Mani is rather choosy about whom he performs with. I am one of those few vocalists. He has played with me and encouraged me on innumerable occasions. We are very close. I have performed extensively with him and travelled with him all over the world, along with Vid. G. Harishankar (Khanjira) and others. He knows our family very well, my father, my brothers, everybody. He has a lot of affection for all of us,

and especially he has good regard for me as a disciple of Vid. TM Thyagarajan. Our association is for more than 5 decades.

There are three technical terms we generally come across in Carnatic music. Style, School, and Bani. Style is an individualistic thing, like GNB style, Madurai Mani style. Then comes School, which is composed of that artiste's disciples, i.e. those who study under him and follow his style- example, GNB school, Semmanugudi school etc. But something else is Bani. When other schools come seeking and take up an artiste's style, then it becomes his bani. I have seen in Kerala, and Andhra, that artistes are simply mad after the Karaikudi Mani bani. His bani means his technicality, his fingering, his weighty playing, his korvais, his method of application, and his method of presentation. The weight that each stroke of his carries...it is amazing.

He has done many unique things. He was the first artiste to present a mridangam solo, not just a vocal concert with mridangam accompaniment. His approach to the tani avaranam is quite different from others'. His approach to the Sruthi Laya orchestral ensemble was path-



OST with Guru Karaikudi Mani, Embar Kannan and Amrit

breaking. His approach to performing for dance items- varnam, etc. was quite different. He has been very successful in each of these chapters of his music.

Any notable concerts together? The right answer to this question is that my every concert with Vid. Karaikudi Mani became successful and memorable. I have travelled with him to so many towns, so many places, within India and abroad. He ensured that every concert was successful. One concert that I cannot forget is the one that took place in Bangalore a long time back. I sang Bhairavi and sang the Thyagaraja composition, Koluvai Yunnade. The way Vid. Mani played for the anupallavi was unimaginable: unimaginable, unforgettable, non-repeatable. This I announced on the mic also that day. He lifted the song from bottom to hundred- it was a phenomenon.

He is a remarkable man, a very very capable man, a highly knowledgeable man, with strong principles which he will never compromise. I was fortunate that we could move together, exchange views, and perform so many times on the concert stage. Vid. Mani, Vid. Harishankar and I were a unique team. We have performed so many times. Once we went together to his guruji's samadhi. I sang his guruji's songs, and both of them played - Swami Surajananda's songs.

We were so much close. Now he has moved to a distant place and I am also busy, so we are not able to stay in close touch. But I can emphatically state that Karaikudi Mani is an incomparable legend who has made a revolution in the art of mridangam playing.

Coming to how he makes every tani avartanam unique, let me say what I have observed in the large number of concerts he has

performed with me. There were so many occasions when he performed along with Vid. Harishankar on the khanjira. Every time, he will plan something new- he will play chatushram, and then trishram, Harishankar will play khandam, sankeernam, and such combinations. He will select the song which would suit such a presentation, and we will discuss and settle this in advance. This sort of exchange of ideas will be in every concert, This level of planning, and sharing will happen each time. That is his level of commitment. The ultimate aim is success. Not even a single concert of mine has come down to be unsuccessful. Both he and Harishankar were geniuses and therefore I also became a genius (laughter). In one instance in Parthasarathy Swami Sabha, during the December season, I remember how Harishankar was not playing at all in the beginning. He was simply keeping quiet. Mani was playing. But when the tani avartanam came, Harishankar dominated. Such unimaginable strokes, and he played with one hand what is difficult to play even with two hands!

Vid. Mani and I share a mutual regard. He is elder than me. I have a lot of respect for him. He is now more into the spiritual path. In fact he had that streak from the beginning. He is not keen to play concerts nowadays. He will not go after awards and concerts. He is above all this. He has never aspired for any titles, recognitions, money etc. You cannot find another person like him. Leave alone Tamil Nadu, in Andhra and Kerala, so many follow his bani. His students are all over - in Australia, UK, America. His disciples are deeply committed to him and the Karaikudi

Mani Bani will be carried on successfully. There is no doubt about it. The Karaikudi Mani "Intellect" in mridangam will remain in this country for ever.



Chitravina Ravikiran - Journeying through Tirukural

Priyanka Prakash

AT 5 AM in the wee hours of the morning, the beautiful strains of the Chitravina fill our living room beamed by DD-Malayalam of yet another great concert of the prodigy whom we all respectfully refer to as “Chitravina” Ravikiran.....

Oftentimes referred to as the “Mozart of Indian music” by the western world, Chitravina Ravikiran’s incredible prodigious talent has been enormously written about - from his ability (as a toddler) to identify and render over 300 ragas and over 175 talas; his unbelievable energy, zeal and untiring work makes us recall Rabindranath Tagore who writes in the poem “Where the mind is without fear” “where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection.....”

That he is a hugely sought after Global-Guru, a performer beyond compare - both vocal and the ‘Chitravina’, with music lining his every vein and nerve is again a well-known fact.

This article focuses on Vidwan Ravikiran the composer and his recent, much acclaimed and jawdropping effort in setting music to an incomparable 1330 verses in just a matter of 16 hours time! Can one imagine a mind-boggling 169 ragas being used for this exercise?

As a Philadelphia news wire explained - “to put things in perspective it is comparable to a 26 mile marathon in barely 15 minutes...”

Stepping back, Vid. Ravikiran is probably the only composer to have composed in each of the 35 talas - he has over 700 compositions to his credit - and this includes music for symphonies, dance, operas, TV Shows.....he has composed in 5 languages and across a variety of music forms.

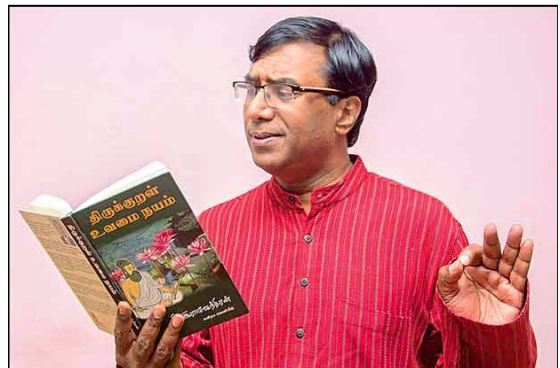
Prior to his session at *The Hindu* Lit for Life 2016 during December last year, Gopalkrishna Gandhi selected 34 couplets from the Tamil

classic *Tirukkural* and asked musician Chitravina N. Ravikiran to set them to tune. Mr. Gandhi had just translated into English what he called *Thiruvalluvar’s undimming work*; Mr. Gandhi felt a musical presentation would add sparkle to a discussion around one of the crown jewels of Tamil literature. Vid Ravikiran asked himself, why would we stop at 34 verses, why not do the 1330 in its entirety? And this thought set the stage for the marathon!

Vid. Ravikiran set music to nearly 350 verses in over three hours, at an average of 100 verses per hour on the first day, and another 420 in under six hours on the second day. On the third day, he set music to the remaining 560 in just over six hours. His aggregate of 1330 verses tuned in 960 minutes averages out to a mind-numbing 1.4 verses per minute. Phew!

The event itself was in early January – between the 12th and 14th of January 2016. The venue was - International Institute of Tamil Studies in Taramani, Chennai

Musicians, scholars, rasikas who witnessed the event live were stunned It was being hailed as historic, a feat unimaginable, simply unbelievable! It was hailed for the classical content, in terms of raga and tala structure yet being inno-





vative in the appropriate application of the ragas for the verses.

We understand that Vidwan Ravikiran has in fact sent recordings of these compositions to many artists such as Unnikrishnan, Nithashree, Sudha Raghunathan, Neyveli Santhanagopalan, Smt. Aruna Sairam – to about 75 artists, and we hope their renditions would be uploaded on youtube.

To quote from The Hindu (Baradwaj Rangan) – “The challenge, thus, wasn’t simply about turning something to be read into something to be sung, but composing formal pieces in the *pallavi-anupallavi-charanam* format that can be performed on the Carnatic concert stage. Ravikiran felt that each group of 10 couplets - an *Adhikaram* - could be treated like a *varnam* or a *kriti*, with ample scope for the improvisatory parts (*niraval*, *kalpanaswaram*).

As an instance, he cited *Adhikaram 65* (on *Solvanmai*, Power of Speech), which he tuned in *Reethigowlai*.

Quoting Vidwan Chitravina Ravikiran “Carnatic music, by itself, never prescribes itself to be religious. It has been used as a medium for spreading religious and spiritual views, but (Subramania) Bharati’s songs are sung on stage too”. As an instrumentalist, he said, “I know that music is bigger than religion or language. Whenever I play pure Carnatic music, whether in Brazil or China or Japan, people appreciate it. My idea was to bring the *Tirukkural* to the mainstream concert platform. I wanted to show it could be done.”

That just about says it all!

RS Ramakanth performing at the 2nd remembrance day of Padmabhushana RK Srikantan



MT Rajakesari on Guru Karaikudi Mani

Sachi R Sachidananda

(Vid. MT Rajakesari is a well-known mridangist from Karnataka who has served in the All India Radio for over three decades as a Selection Top Grade artiste. He has been a disciple of Guru Mani since 1985.)

After serving in AIR Dharwad for 3 years , I came over to Bangalore AIR in 1983. In 1985, I went to Tiruvaïyyaru for the Thyagaraja aradhana. Ustad Amjad Ali Khan had come to perform on the sarod in the festival. Since the Ustad had a working acquaintance with Carnatic music, they thought of a mridangam accompaniment. I was requested by the organisers and encouraged by Vid. Kunnukudi Vaidyanathan to accompany the Ustad. That programme was live telecast all over the country as directed by the then Information and Broadcasting minister Sri

V.N. Gadgil, who had come to attend the programme.

Later I came to know that Guru Karaikudi Mani witnessed that live telecast along with his Guru Surajananda. He appreciated my playing and expressed a wish that one day I should come over and join his percussion school. Guru Surajananda answered him prophetically that it would happen for sure. And it did come about just a few months later that I was again present in the Shivaratri Akhandam festival at Tiruvaïyyaru. Guru Mani had also come to perform there. I approached him and requested that I be accepted as his disciple. He said, "you have a good hand, come and join us". That was the momentous turn in my musical career.



I had learnt mridangam under AIR artiste Vid. KS Gopala Rao. I had heard Guru Mani as early as in 1965 at a Vid. DK Jayaraman concert in Malleswaram Sangeetha Sabha. In 1971 I had heard him accompany Vid. TK Rangachari. Later in 1978 I heard him again with Vid DKJ. I was attracted to the Guru Karaikudi Mani style which was very different and brilliant.

After I became his disciple, I used to travel every month on the second Saturday and Sunday to Chennai to learn from Guru Mani. I have sat on the stage many times and heard him accompany many stalwarts like Vid. Ramani, Vid. Lalgudi and so on. Guru Mani has taught many students from Karnataka, especially after he started the Sruthi Laya Seva Kendra here in 2000.

The Guru Karaikudi Mani "parampare" has an estimated 2500 disciples all over the world, those who have learnt directly from him and also those who have absorbed it indirectly. They live in many countries including Australia, England, America and Canada. Even other schools have started following his bani. His permutations and combinations are totally new. After the famous triumvirate- Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subramania Pillai and CS Murugabhoopathy, he is the founder of a new, recognisable, bani. The Mani bani is successful because it is so different and so very good.

Guru Karaikudi Mani style of mridangam playing produces weighty and clear strokes, employing a kappi mridangam. Unlike the kuchi mridangam which resonates even to a light touch, the kappi mridangam requires a considerable expertise of touch to produce the full range of strokes from the mellow to the impactful. The Mani style sounds heavy but is very pleasant at the same time. Guru Mani has accompanied with distinction a number of masters like DK Jayaraman, KV Narayanaswamy, DK Pattammal, Lalgudi, Voleti, Kalyanaraman and so on. His style of accompaniment has proved very effective in every case. He adapts his style to the performer's manodharma, specifically the actual music being presented, and the sound level required. I have heard him in a number of concerts with MSS

since 1977/78. He has accompanied many violin solos - Lalgudi, TN Krishnan, MS Gopalakrishnan, and Mysore Nagaraj, Manjunath.

Guru Mani has accompanied many leading vidwans of this generation also: Vidwan Chitraveena Ravikiran, Sanjay Subramanyan, TM Krishna, Sikkil Gurucharan etc.

Guru Mani has a special approach to the tani avartanam. He excels in accompanying the pallavi in an RTP following closely the sahitya, the exact laya aspect including the tala/nadai and arudi. When it comes to the tani, his approach is highly systematic. He builds a superstructure based on a preconceived plan. The system and the approach is the same whether the tani is a short one or a long one. Rasikas and vidwans with different levels of understanding will all be equally attracted to his tani presentation. His style creates an instant rapport with the audience. After Palghat Mani Iyer, it is said that it is only Guru Karaikudi Mani who could attract over a hundred listeners to a concert just to hear his tani. Some members of the audience would leave immediately after the tani!

Guru Mani suffered a hand fracture in a vehicular accident many years ago. After a couple of months, he recovered in time to play in Krishna Gana Sabha an exclusive tani concert! The large hall was full even before the concert, filled with mridangam, tavil and other laya vidwans. In Narada Gana Sabha in 1997/98, Guru Mani gave a mridangam-tavil concert with Vid Kalaimurthy. It was a unique programme and over a hundred Tavil students from Tanjavur had come to listen to the concert.

Guru Mani does not repeat his tani. Every solo is unique and different. He plans it in advance. The Karaikudi Mani- G Harishankar (khanjira) combination was very special.

Guru Mani gives much importance to the upakavadya artistes (ghatam, khanjira, and morsing). Not all mridangam maestros are known to do this. His approach is always positive and aims at the success of the entire team on the stage.

Guru Mani has a special knack for accompanying the lighter items after the tani in a concert. This comes from the experience he gained accompanying Pithukuli Murugadas even as a small boy. He learnt also tabla bols by observing the tabla artistes play in the Sri Murugadas troupe. He plays for the lighter items in a very melodious style which enhances the music significantly. You can observe this especially in his concerts with MSS, who was well known to sing those rakti/bhava-laden items in the concert. I have heard that the young boy Mani would sometimes dose off on the stage in the all-night Pithukuli Murugadas concerts. Sri Murugadas ensured that he would keep awake and also used to encourage him on the stage with chocolates.

Guru Mani has moved into a philosophical plane in recent years. He has received guidance from a great Kundalini yogi, Guru Surajananda. Every year in December, he conducts a festival in Chennai and confers the Guru Surajananda award recognising senior musicians. He invites artistes from all over to perform in the festival. Senior mridangam artistes from Karnataka have

also performed in that festival. He also brings out a bi-monthly magazine Layamani Layam (now as an e-magazine) which educates people about laya and mridangam techniques. It carries interviews and articles about well-known vidwans.

Apart from Sruthi Laya concerts, Guru Mani has many collaborations in fusion music with world renowned artistes and ensembles. His Laya CDs are a store-house of vidwat and innovation on various nadais, and combinations of strokes.

Today's youngsters are intelligent and work hard. They have many opportunities today, when compared to 20-25 years ago. They have the advantage of getting inputs and ideas from many sources and many experts as well as cultivating role models. But it is important to develop your own "anubhava" to be able to combine well with the main artiste and make the concert a success. The Guru Karaikudi Mani bani will guide the present and future generations to excel in the field of laya and Carnatic music. In this regard, the contribution of this bani is monumental.

Honouring Rudrapatnam Brothers



Rudrapatna has over the years, become synonymous with art and culture for the sheer quantity and quality of artists it has produced. Rudrapatnam Brothers have carved a niche for themselves as one of the most prominent duos. They are known for their strict adherence to tradition and unparalleled mastery over rendition of kritis, Alaapanas and Swara Prastara. A

career spanning more than 6 decades, Rudrapatnam brothers have been performing at the highest levels of Karnatak music and have trained an entire generation of musicians. In view of such exemplary achievements, their students consider it an honour to recognise them by felicitating them. The program is scheduled for 16th July, 2016 at Vyalikaval Rama Mandira, 14th A Cross Rd, Vyalikaval, Bangalore at 5 PM.

The function will be graced by Sri N.S.Krishnamurthy, Retd. Director of AIR, Ganakala Bhushana Vidwan Sri R.K.Padmanabha and Kala Bhushana Vidwan B.K.Chandramouli. The felicitation will be followed by flute concert of Amith Nadig accompanied by Mathur Srinidhi (Violin), Jayachandra Rao (Mridangam) and Omkar Rao (Ghatam). All are welcome.

Veena Balachander's fury

CP Chikkanna, Music critic

The late Veena Balachander was a multi faceted personality. Besides Veena, he could play mridangam, Kanjira, Sitar etc. He was an actor, film producer, script writer, director, an orator par excellence and a great musicologist. He created a controversy by openly stating that the composition of Swathi Thirunal were composed by others!

He organised a grand function in 1968 at Hema Malini hall, Lloyds Road, Madras to celebrate the silver jubilee of his Veena career. The invitation card carried the names of the entire top leading musicians of the day under the head "special guests of honour/committee of hosts" and included even the Thambura players!.

His living room in his residence in Mylapore resembled a show case of mementos carrying the names of the cities abroad where he had performed pasted on them including the date!.. He was a wonderful person to observe. He was equally bad/short tempered for frivolous reasons!.

He presented an unique concert with 45 mela ragamalika without accompanists under the aegis of Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat in 1971 during the music conference in Bangalore that I attended. It was a testing time for lay listener's patience. The items were only Ragalapana fol-

lowed by Tanam in 3 speeds. The ragamalika started with the first melakarta Kanakangi and ended with 45th mela Shubapantuvarali. HMV also brought out an LP record of the same.

Once he was invited by the Vellore Sangeetha Sabha for a Veena concert. Picking his accompaniment Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan for Violin, Vellore Ramabadran for Mrudangam and Palghat Sundaram for Ghatam, he drove to Vellore in his car. While passing through the city, he noticed his Veena recital advertisement poster pasted on a municipal dust bin!

He was very jovial sharing jokes with his accompanists but after seeing the poster, he was furious and angry. After reaching the venue, he asked the accompanists to be inside the car. The sabha office bearers were summoned.

He gave them sound dressing in harsh words for pasting his concert posters on a municipal dust bin!.. The sabha management deeply apologised for the incident and mentioned that they had distributed the posters for the advertisement throughout the town to Cinema poster boys and that they were unaware of the poster on the dust bin.

Despite repeated pleas he cancelled the concert and returned to Madras. There after he never played in Vellore again!

Kalavantha - 2016

Kalavantha-2016 hosted by Karnataka Fine Arts Council (KFAC) concluded on 29 May 2016. Senior musician Vid. A Kanyakumari presented the award to the youngsters. The programme commenced with a concert of Vid. A Kanyakumari and Vittal Rangan accompanied by Vidwan KV Prasad on Mridangam and Vidwan Ranganatha Chakravarthi on the ghatam.

The winners are;

Aishwarya Shankar - Vocal

Ramana Balachandhra - Veena

Sayee Rakshit - Violin

Trichy G Aravind - Mridangam

R Karthik - Kanjira

(Pictures on back cover page)

All pure gold, no wastage

Sachi R Sachidananda

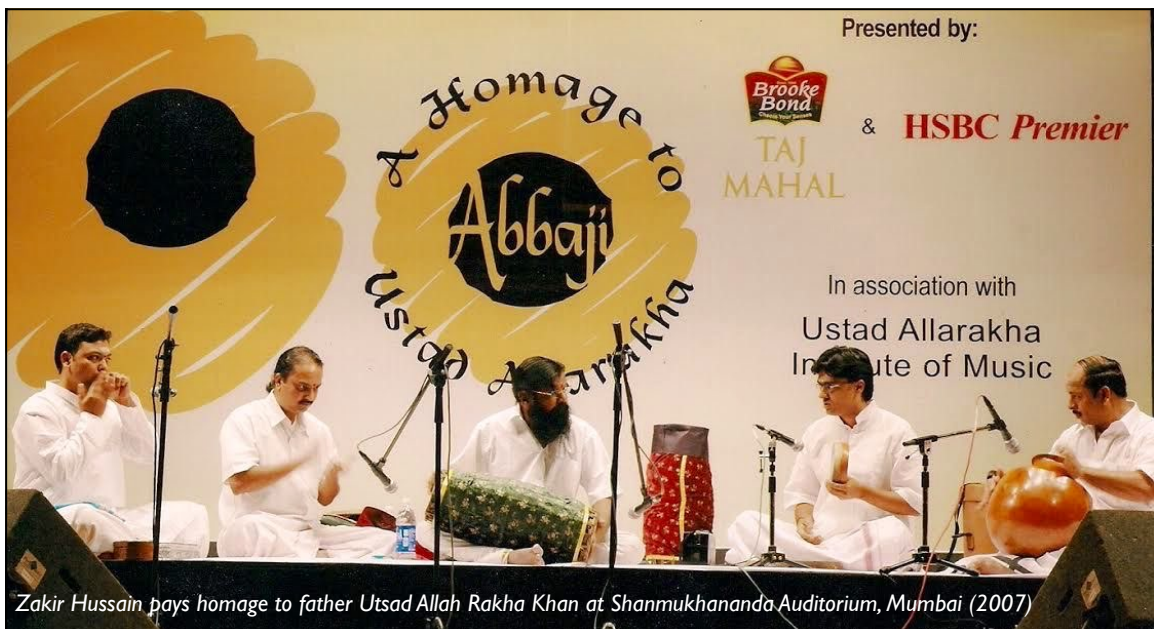
(Vid. Amrit is a leading khanjira artiste and performs all over the world in classical concerts as well as in pure percussion ensembles and cross-genre explorations. He has performed with Guru Karaikudi Mani in innumerable concerts and narrates his experiences with a palpable sense of adoration):

I started performing on mridangam and khanjira when I was eight years old around 1985, accompanying my father Vid. Basavanagudi Nagaraj, a violinist of repute, with the blessings of my mridangam guru, Vid. Vasudeva Rao. During late '80s, I came to know about Guru Karaikudi Mani's Shruti Laya albums and managed to get hold of the vol. 2 (as vol. 1 was sold out). I was simply mesmerised by the music that blended melody with rhythm impeccably and showcased the power of his creative imagination without kanakku sidelining the melody. And then, when I could listen to the Sruthi Laya vol. I, I was blown away. I consider these two volumes to be the

equivalent of Bhagavadgita for every laya vidwan. They set the benchmark of excellence even today. Also, after listening to Vid. Harishankar on the khanjira in these Sruthi Laya CDs, I firmed up my decision to concentrate on khanjira.

Every student of percussion gives more attention to tani avartanam. In the beginning, at that young age, accompanying for songs is not as attractive as pure percussion. What appealed to me in the Sruthi Laya format was that Guru Mani created ample scope for the khanjira. The percentage of time a khanjira artiste will play and show his talent in a regular concert is rather limited, since mridangam mainly holds the fort. But even in a regular concert, Guru Mani plans the tani and gives unexpected "breaks" for the khanjira artiste to step in and play simultaneously with the mridangam artiste.

In 2004/2005, there was an interesting incident., I was performing with him in Narada Gana Sabha. The mic volume for the khanjira was too



high compared to mridangam or vocal. In order to blend well, I was playing rather softly. Mani-sir asked me why I was playing so softly. When I said that the khanjira mic amplification was too much, he told me to go ahead and play at my usual volume, as only then the mic man would know the issue and rectify the setting. Sure enough, as soon as I started playing in my normal way, the mic tech came and fixed the issue! After the concert, Mani-sir told me, "When you play with me, don't hold yourself back. Feel free to play to your strength". Mani-sir is like that till date. He gives full rein to all of us, and leads us from the front with all his energy and zest.

Even today, when Guru Mani comes to Bangalore for a concert, he reviews what he had played previously, and plans a new presentation each time for the tani. He is a full impact, full intensity player always. He doesn't take any concert casually, even though everyone knows his greatness and he doesn't need to prove anything anymore.

World over, percussion concerts draw their own audiences. There is no need to restrict and append percussion to melody or song structure. This was not so in our music until Guru Mani pioneered the Sruthi Laya approach. He showed the way to every percussionist thereafter. Only after him, we feel confident to take centre-stage and lead percussion ensembles.

After listening to Sruthi Laya, I started following my role models, Guru Mani and Harishankar-sir. I shifted to the much more challenging and difficult kappi mridangam from the more player-friendly kuchi type. Kappi mridangam has great weight, requires a lot of maintenance, and the artiste has to make a special effort to play attractively and impactfully. To this day, Guru Mani plays the kappi mridangam and has set the standard for others follow.

I cannot forget the first live performance of Guru Mani and Vid Harishankar, which I heard in Odakattur Mutt in 1995/1996. It was a laya vinyasam presented at 5 PM before the main concert. This method was adopted by Mani-sir



With Helsinki Symphony Orchestra



Zakir Hussain, N Amrit and V Suresh with GKR

to make people listen to tani avartanam and appreciate the pure laya aspects. This type of presentation preceded the main concert and replaced the usual tani. On that day, at 4 PM, the hall was already overflowing with listeners. The two played remarkably and that tani is still ringing in my ears. They had also performed together in Yavanika in 1990 or so, but I was too young then to know about such programmes. But I managed to get a recording of the Yavanika concert, in which Guru Mani has also sung Shanmukhapriya. He is a brilliant singer too. In the Odakattur Mutt concert also, first he sang the pallavi and then went on to the laya vinyasam.

I later became a disciple of Vid. Harishankar, with the help of an introduction from Mani-sir's disciple Mr. Ravishankar of Malaysia. Meanwhile I had won the national level AIR competition for mridangam in 1996 and khanjira in 1997, and had moved on full-time to khanjira. I started going to Vid. Harishankar in Chennai for classes over weekends and any time he was free to teach me. I had already started playing in his style on the khanjira and his teaching consolidated my learning. This was from 1999 till 2002, when unfortunately Vid. Harishankar passed away.

Although Mani-sir knew about me in those intervening years., my big break came in 2003, when I met him after his concert in Odakattur Mutt. I re-introduced myself as Amrit, a student of Vid. Harishankar. He held for my hands for a while, and told me that I should perform with him! This has been going on till today and I have performed with Mani-sir in dozens of concerts.

Mani-sir has no issue when the khanjira vidwan plays to his full ability and even a notch better than the mridangam artiste. He has complimented me on stage itself. Performing with Mani-sir in regular concerts and also Sruthi Laya concerts has gone a long way in my musical development. I have won the Lec-dem award at Music Academy and also Yuva Kala Bharathi puraskar.

In 2007, there was a magnificent performance of Sruthi Laya in Shanmukhananda Hall. It was at the annual tribute to Ustad Alla Rakha. A 75 minute percussion concert in the afternoon slot drew a record crowd. Mani-sir, Ghatam Suresh, myself on khanjira and Bharadwaj on morsing. Every big-name percussionist was present, and even today people recall that concert with goosebumps. There was a four minute standing ovation after the performance. Ustad Zakir Hussain had organised the programme so well, he even came and did the mic check himself.

I have performed with Mani-sir in many fusion and cross-genre ensembles. In Australia, with a Philharmonic orchestra in Finland, and quite recently in the Sai Global Symphony, a megapresentation created by Guru Mani and Mike Herting. Performing with western musicians is difficult as the entire music has to be scripted in staff notation for them and for us in our written way. Mani-sir spares no effort to create a masterpiece and we have hundreds of hours of rehearsal. The result is always something of excellence.

With meticulous planning and performing to suit the occasion, Mani-sir ensures that there is no wastage of any kind- no casual phrases, no "tick in the box" approach. Mani-sir encourages us to perform to our best ability and enhance the concert. There have been many occasions when I have played my turn for as long as the mridangam turn. I have got a chance to present my best. He is very generous to his fellow artistes. Many times, he has paid us more than what was settled earlier, something rare indeed.

In 2014 on Jaya TV, there was a percussion concert by Shanmuka ensemble of Mani-sir (with Chennai-based artistes). I also performed as a guest artiste. Each such presentation presents pure, solid, Carnatic percussion ideas. Mani-sir always focusses on the best overall output. An apt metaphor would be "All gold, no wastage".

Even today, Mani-sir keeps saying we have to strive more, for something new and fresh, retaining the best values of music. He has several thousand students and "emulators" around the world. His bani is so well established. His biggest contribution to theoretical aspects was to create and run a magazine devoted to laya: Layamani Layam. It is full of deep insights and discussions apart from laya analysis material. It is unique in the field of music.

Mani-sir is running a gurukula even today. There is a Ganesha temple where all pujas are performed every day. He devoted himself to Guru Surajananda many decades ago. Nowadays he feels that the "depth" of music of stalwarts like the late Vid. DK Jayaraman is missing. He therefore restricts himself to a few public performances a year. He leads a holistic life and is even an excellent cook. He always cooks his own food, and stays in an apartment with kitchen even while travelling. He always wears white. Even his winter clothes for the trip to Finland was all-white. He loved the cold sub-zero weather and took a walk- in all-white. He says there is an incomparable dignity in white.

His approach to every aspect of life shows he is 'the total man'. He has a sense of purpose and destiny every moment of his life. He epitomises the expression: "All Gold. No Wastage".

Homage to Palghat Shri. Raghu (09 Jan 1928 - 02 Jun 2009)



Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira and team pays respectful homage to the greatest Mridangam Vidwan of the recent times, Sangita Kalanidhi Palghat Shri. Raghu Sir on the occasion of his 7th death anniversary.

Vidwan KS Kalidas has gone on record saying, Shri. Raghu evolved a technique of his own by absorbing the techniques of the Pazhani school and the legend Pazhani was like a manasika guru for him. One could notice the influence of Pazhani school in Shri. Raghu's playing.

Parivadini, making a difference

Sachi R Sachidananda

(I met "Lalitharam" (pen-name) of Parivadini when he was doing a webcast from a house concert. I had heard about him, his real name bring Ramachandran Mahadevan, as the author of well-researched books on GNB and Pazhani, and also who had made an interesting documentary on the musician and artiste S. Rajam. I was surprised to meet someone in his thirties, full of passion and energy in pursuing so many activities in the field of Carnatic music, despite his full-time career in the field of technology. Our conversation that followed shows the difference Parivadini has made in the field of Carnatic music just in two years.)

Parivadini is a charitable trust formed for the cause of promoting young talents and recognising unsung heroes of Indian Classical Music. Parivadini was started in 2013 and during the December season of that year live webcast of over 150 concerts. It created a wave among rasikas and artistes. Since then, they have webcast over 1600 hours of live concerts. The chal-

lenge is now to curate this archive (all available through You Tube) by tagging the artistes, dates, venues, and tracks by raga, tala, song, composer and length.

There is another initiative of Parivadini, called the Parlandu award. It has been instituted to recognise instrument makers.

Some questions and his answers:

Q. How did you decide to start Parivadini?

A. Parivadini was started as a wild dream to have 24/7 channel for music, culture and arts. Venkat (now running Tandora networks) and I wanted to build it block by block. The first step was to start a You Tube channel. We wanted to focus on increasing the consumption population of Carnatic music. Venturing into live webcast was more of an accident. But it caught up as



Padmavathy Ananthagopalan presenting Fernandes (Parlandu) Award of Excellence to Veena Maker Mr. Raju of Bangalore

wild fire and before we realised we were turning down more webcast requests than what we were doing.

Q. If a sabha or an artiste is to be featured in Parivadini, how do they go about it and how much does it cost?

A. After Parivadini transformed itself into a charitable trust in 2015, we operate purely based on a first come first served basis. The trustees are also Carnatic music aficionados. However, we never let our likes and dislikes come in the way of choosing to webcast. There are a few other considerations such as internet bandwidth, availability of an audio mixer etc. that dictate our choice of webcast. In 2015, more than 70% of our webcasts have been from Raga Sudha Hall in Chennai. There are two reasons for it: 1. We get uninterrupted bandwidth thanks to the broadband connection available at the Sabha. 2. The artistes and concerts featured through Nada Inbam and other Sabhas that utilise this location seem to feature young talents and veterans who do not enjoy the lime-light they deserve.

We feel vindicated when a young artiste calls and says he got new concert opportunities because, an organiser in some corner of the world took note of his talent through our webcasts.

Regarding cost, we do not charge the artistes or the organiser. Although in some cases the artistes/sabhas have been kind enough to donate to our trust.

Q. How can people access the webcasts? Is it only live or also archived?

The concerts that are webcast can be seen live as well as on the archive of our YouTube channel. On specific requests from the artistes or the organisers we may remove the webcast concert from the archive.

Q. What are the other activities of Parivadini?

A. For several reasons, all the limelight seems to be falling on not more than 20 Carnatic musicians. While there is nothing undeserving about the ones that enjoy popularity, there are several hundred wonderful musicians who are confined

to the reaches of only the well informed rasikas of classical music. While our webcast is predominantly focused on addressing this gap, we also conduct a yearly series broadly on the lines of objectives mentioned above. Our yearly series has a twin pronged approach. One is to organise events that usual organiser would hesitate to do (For example: giving a prime slot to lec dem or Centenary celebrations of Mridangam legend CS Murugabhoopathi). Other is carefully document information which we might otherwise loose over a period of time and making it available for everyone forever.

Q. Tell us about Parivadini's Parlandu award.

A. This award was born during a casual Facebook chat with mridangam artiste Trivandrum Balaji. He mentioned the need recognise the contributions of instrument makers. If you take a close look, almost all categories in performing, recording, distribution and consuming Carnatic music seems to have an award for recognising talent/contributions. But for instrument makers, except for recognition from musicians on rare occasions, there are no awards. We wanted to start one and do it consistently – year after year. We chose to name after Parlandu (Fernandes) as he was the one behind the brilliant 'nada' of Palghat Mani Iyer and Pazhani Subramania Pillai. The inaugural award went to Parlandu's son Selvam. In 2014, we awarded to Varadan – again a mridangam maker who worked with CS Murugabhoopathi. This year we awarded Mr. Raju from Bangalore for his contribution towards veena making.

Lalitharam says that Parivadini has started to consolidate in 2015. Of course they will continue the regular webcasts and the yearly series. They are also working on documentation projects – through interviews, lecdems and documentary movies. Also extensive ground work has been done to have regular shows in our online channel targeted towards expanding the appreciation levels among the interested listener.

Lalitharam ends the discussion on a very encouraging note:

"I have been writing on music for over a decade now. More than 90% of the ones that have contacted me after reading what I had written have been people who are not initiated into Carnatic music listening. There is a lot of curiosity among the common man towards classical music. We need to figure out ways to reassure common man that you don't need to know whole lot to enjoy classical music.

Here are quotes from two leading Carnatic musicians:

Smt. Gayathri Girish:

Music Rasikas are spread all over the country and across the world. Organising quality music concerts in all places is not viable. Even within a city, commuting has become very difficult. Under such circumstances, the wonderful service done by Parivadhini to take music to rasikas is

very commendable. Webcast of concerts, lecture demonstrations and thematic programs enable rasikas and students worldwide to listen to good music at their convenience, enjoy and appreciate Carnatic Music. This also provides excellent archival for future reference.

Kudos to Parivadhini for this wonderful service.

Vid. Sriram Parasuram:

Classical music needs to be essentially valued and nurtured. Performances can be arranged by hundreds of Sabhas but there are only a few organisations that genuinely 'serve' our great classical music tradition - making sure that its most precious and unique aspects are projected for today's rasikas and students and preserved for generations to come... Parivadhini is one such... May Goddess Saraswati keep smiling benevolently on this wonderful institution...

'Udayabhanu Kala Sangha' Bangalore, in its golden jubilee celebration felicitated Shri. GV Krishnaprasad, Hon. Secretary, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira with the title 'Udayabhanu Suvarna Samskruti Ratna' on 21st Feb at Ravindra Kalakshetra.

Former Union Minister Shri. MV Rajashekaran presented the award.



Kunnakudi's encounter with Chowdaiah

CP Chikkanna, Music critic

In my childhood, I was initiated into violin by my father Karaikudi Ramaswamy Shastri. At 10, I was privileged to accompany Doyen Sri Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar which was my debut. Later, I was accompanying my sister's vocal duet concerts.

At that time, violin Maestro, Mysore Chowdaiah was highly popular and dominating the entire South India. I was his ardent fan and I was very eager to see him and his 7 stringed violin.

Around mid 1950's, he came to Madurai for a solo concert at Kakathode kalluri (A college inside a coconut form). He was staying in a bungalow and I was not permitted inside.

When he alighted from the car at the college entrance, I prostrated before him with deep respect and devotion. He lovingly patted my back and inquired about me. I introduced myself and followed him in to the auditorium and stood before him with folded hands. He asked me "What is the matter"? Could I kindly see your violin? I politely replied. Chowdaiah turned towards his disciple Chidambaram Ramanujam. He brought the violin box and opened it. I was very keenly observing it...Chowdaiah asked me 'can you tune it?'. I will try I told him and after several attempts, tuned it a bit. He checked and smilingly nodded his head in approval. I was immensely pleased.

On account of this interaction. I was allowed to sit in front of the dais. The Maestro was accompanied by his senior disciple RK Venkatarama Sastry and Chidambaram Ramanujam. CS Murugabhoopathy on Mridangam and Alangudi Ramachandran's ghatam. It was a 4 hours recital. This acquaintance immensely developed further and I was accorded the honour of carrying his violin box, whenever we met. This goodwill lasted throughout his life.

Despite his command/mastery over violin, his innovative techniques, experimentation, his simple human nature and broad mentality made him immensely popular.

If some one reaches the peak of success in his/her chosen field/career, especially in the field of performing arts, his/her attitude transforms into ego, arrogance and self esteem. Close associates, friends and long time acquaintances are avoided/ignored which I have observed and experienced.

Chowdaiah is an exception to this attitude. See how he interacted with a stranger like me without any formal introduction! Many musicians never allow others to even touch their instruments.

His innovation of 7 strings violin created ripples in music circle. Many admired his innovation. In the mic less period, singers were compelled to



sing in high pitch (around 5 or G#) in order to reach large audience. It was a difficult task for the violinists and hence Chowdaiah's invention of 7 string violin was successful.

Some expressed the apprehension about the worthiness to concert, considering that the player has to apply all his skills and bowing techniques. It required special skills on the fingers to apply equal pressure on both the strings at the same time the bowing too had to be uniform on both the strings.

He could produce the effect of flute by using only 2 strings whereas I miserably failed to emulate him on my 4 stringed violin despite rigorous training and attempts. He was a king in playing Tanam. Instead of passing the bow horizontally over the strings, he used to gently tap the strings and produce lilting swaras! many tried to copy him and miserably failed!

It was Chowdaiah who designed a special box to keep 2 instruments in one box. He got ivory knobs fixed for the keys to adjust the tension of strings.

With vibhuti stripes on his forehead, wearing diamond ear studs, diamond rings with Chamundeshwari prasada kumkum in his forehead, Chowdaiah cut out a figure of a holy person and commanded high respect both on and off the stage.

As a violinist par excellence, as a composer, as a teacher, as a music director, film producer/actor, Chowdaiah's contribution to Indian culture is invaluable. Due to his efforts, his disciples RK Venkatarama Sastry, V Sethuramaiah and CR Mani Iyer were employed in the AIR.

All the awards, rewards, name, fame are all his blessings which I always cherish and dedicate at his lotus feet as he was my 'Aradhya daiva' and source of inspiration. I followed his footsteps to reach the peak of success in my carrier. Chowdaiah memorial hall has become an internationally acclaimed edifice which is the greatest one can pay him.

Chowdaiah's life time is a golden chapter in the history of Carnatic music.

Our forthcoming Concerts

Sunday, 17 July, 2016, 5.30 pm
(SRLKM auditorium)

Sumitra Vasudev - Vocal
Ashwin Anand - Veena
K Arun Prakash - Mridangam

Sunday, 14 August, 2016, 5.30 pm
(Sri Devagiri Venkateshwara Temple)

Vishaka Hari - Musical discourse in English
Subject - Sri Krishna Leela
Charulatha Ramanujam - Violin
Arjun Ganesh SJ - Mridangam
Sukanya Ramgopal - Ghatam

Sunday, 21 August, 2016, 5.30 pm
(SRLKM auditorium)

Bhargavi Venkatram - Vocal
Apoorva Krishna - Violin
Akshay Anand - Mridangam
Ganesh Murthy V - Ghatam

Sunday, 18 September, 2016, 5.30 pm
(SRLKM auditorium)

Amritha Murali - Vocal
BK Raghu - Violin
Akshay Anand - Mridangam

Sunday, 16 October, 2016, 5.30 pm
(SRLKM auditorium)

Savitha Narasimhan - Vocal
Charulatha Ramanujam - Violin
B Ganapathiraman - Mridangam

Tuesday, 01 Nov, 2016, 5.30 pm
(SRLKM auditorium)

Heramba and Hemantha (Flute Duet)
and party

Ramana
Balachandhran



Aishwarya Shankar



Sayee Rakshit



Trichy G Aravind



R Karthik



Kalavanta - 2016