

An Evening of Mesmerizing Music
Carnatic Vocal Concert by Sanjay Subramanian (May 30, 1998)
A review by Praba Subramaniam

In the more than 11 years of SRUTI's existence, I have never reviewed a concert. But when Uma Prabhakar requested that I review Sanjay Subramanian's concert, I jumped at the opportunity without hesitation. Sanjay is one of my favorites among the up and coming artists. Those who attended his performance for SRUTI in 1995 surely remember the beautiful Mayamalava Gowla of that day. And if you heard his 30 May 1998 for SRUTI, I am sure you will agree with me that he has since improved considerably.

His Todi, in which he rendered Thagaraja's well known Kaddanu variki, was embellished with some beautiful panchama varga prayogas. He delivered an elaborate neraval for Niddura Nirakarinchi and included the kuraippu in the kalpana swarams. Earlier, during a well rendered alapana in Shankarabharanam, he impressed me by singing a seldom heard kriti Bagumeera of Vennai Kuppu Iyer. The neraval and kalpana swarams for Nilavanyamu were noteworthy.

Sanjay began with the famous Bhairavi Ata tala varanam 'Viriboni' of Pachimiriam Adiyappayya. This piece set the mood for the next 31/4 hours. He then offered a crisp Samhashti Charanam kriti Vallabha nayaksya of Dikshitar in Begada ragam, followed by a brief alapana in Anandabhairavi ragam and the rather rare kriti of Thyagaraja Neeke teliyaka. I say rare because Thyagaraja has not composed many kritis in this raga. He followed this kriti with Papanasam Sivam's short piece Chittam Irangadadenaiya in the raga Sahana.

The choice of the raga and the kritis showed that Sanjay is very much molded in the classical mode. This spirit was evidenced throughout the concert.

All the ragas so far were in suddha madhyama, so I was rather expecting a prati madhyama raga for RTP. However, he surprised me by taking raga Mohana for RTP (a madhyama varja raga). It was undeniably beautiful with all the difficult brigas and gamakas, and of course along with that came all of his Anga Seshtai (body gestures)! Only natural, I suppose, when someone has to bring out all those difficult prayogas! He sang a crisp Pallavi in Kanda jathi ata talam in Tisra Gathis, rendering it in three kalams (speeds), followed by ragamalika swarams in Kedaram, Saranga (this was the first pratimadhyama ragam, the second being Hamirkalyani in the sloka rendition). Natakurunji and Behag.

Even the so-called Tukkadas he rendered after the pallavi were very classical and heavy: javal Nirupamana in Behag, slokam Shantakaram in Yadukula Kambhoji, Hamir Kalyani Surati and Sama, followed by Sivan's Narayana in Sama raga. He concluded the concert with Paras Tillana.

Palghat Raghu's Tani after the Todi kriti was excellent. Of course he is a giant in mridangam playing, and he proved it during that performance. Anantkrishnan gave good support on the violin.

This concert was an affirmation of the statement of Rasikan, who wrote in his Sruti Ranjani review of Sanjay's 1995 concert that the future of Carnatic music is safe in the hands of artists like Sanjay. Sanjay Subramanian does not possess a great voice. Despite this deficiency, in my opinion, he surpasses any of the youngsters in today's Carnatic Music World!

Praba Subramaniam is an avid music enthusiast. She has served in various capacities in previous SRUTI committees and continues to be a strong supporter of this organization.