

Sikil Gurucharan
Carnatic Vocal Concert (April 5, 2008)
A review by P. Swaminathan

SRUTI presented a vocal concert by Sikil Gurucharan on April 5, 2008. This is the first program among the 2008 concert series of SRUTI. This is also the first time Gurucharan performed for SRUTI audience. Gurucharan was accompanied on the violin by Nagai Sriram, nephew of maestro Nagai Muralidharan and by Neyveli Skandasubramaniam on the mridangam.

Starting the concert with a brisk rendering of Thyagaraja's 'Brochevarevare' in sri ranjani, Gurucharan gave a classical performance of Bhadrachala Ramadass' krithi 'O Rama nee nama' in purvi kalyani rich in imagination and highly demonstrative of his creativity. After performing an elaborate alapana and good niraval, he concluded the krithi briskly without a swarakalpana. 'Suma sayaka' of Swati Tirunal which describes the oscillating moods of a pining nayaki, received a high-standard execution with niraval improvisation and lilting swaraprasthara. This piece in addition to being a popular dance musical is particularly interesting in the sense this is classified as (pada) varnam, which is usually rendered in the beginning of a concert as a warm up item. However, the structure of this composition contains intricate raga delineations with raga malika swaras characteristic of a krithi. Hence many artists prefer to render this (krithi) pada-varnam during the middle of the concert instead of at the beginning like other varnams. Gurucharan followed a similar tradition. Even though there are no defined rules as to when to render a particular song in karnatic music concert, there are some artistic preferences set in traditional music concert where varnams are rendered as the introductory item. His renderings of Kotiswara Iyer's 'Ganamuda panam' in jyotiswarupini and the delineation of 'Nimma bhagya doddadu', a Purandaradasa composition with charming idioms and phrases including niraval and swaras were classy. The piece de resistance of the concert was Swati Tirunal's popular krithi 'Rama Rama gunaseema' in simhendra madhyamam. He gave an elaborate alapana of simhendra madhyamam, (even though I got the impression that he was going to render either shanmukapriya or kiravani in the beginning few moments). However, the rendering of the krithi, niraval on the familiar phrase 'muni manasa Rama' and the ensuing kalpana swaras were indicative of his artistic ability. During the sixties and seventies, this krithi was made popular by none other than Smt. M.S. Subbalakshmi including her recital at the Carnegie Hall in US. Gurucharan went on to give an RTP in the raga lalitha set to khandajathi-triputa tala. His rendering of the ragamalika swaras following RTP were too short - too fast which simply disappeared before it could register. After rendering some popular short pieces Gurucharan concluded the concert with Lalgudi Jayaraman's tillana in desh. Blessed with a baritone voice Gurucharan's recital proved that quality is the result of hard work and knowledge gained from great teachers in addition of God's Gift.

Nagai Sriram provided refined and mellifluous violin accompaniment. His simhendra madhyamam essay deserves mention. He earned as much applause as Gurucharan did during the alapanas and swaraprastharas. Mridangist Skandasubramaniam gave a good account of himself. Right through the songs and tani avarthanam his mridangam accompaniment was not a mere energetic sound. It vibrated with the chords of percussive power and penetration with the lightning patterns sprawled all over the auditorium.