

Wonderful Kalyani at Thyagaraja Aradhana

Carnatic Vocal Concert (March 25, 2017)

A Review by by Dinakar Subramanian

It was a nice afternoon at the Delaware temple in Hockessin where we all sat down to enjoy the traditional Aradhana concert for 2017. Sangeetha Swaminathan was performing with Kamalakiran Vinjamuri on the violin, Vijay Ganesh on the mridangam and Vinay Mallikarjun on the Kanjira. Sangeetha, a disciple of Sudha Raghunathan, started with the sedate (Sangita) vidulaku mrokkeda in mAyAmAlavagowLai where Thyagaraja salutes the maestros of music. She performed the neraval at the usual - kamalA gowrI followed by kalpanaswarams.



The tentativeness in the first song disappeared when Sangeetha rendered the beautiful bhairavI kriti - cetulAra srngAramu - a song that is usually played on the flute at the Thyagaraja Aradhana in tiruvaiyAru. Sangeetha rendered the brisk sangatis in the pallavi with great control. What followed was about 8 minutes of a brilliant AlApanA in vasantabhairavI essentially elevating the ragam usually represented by a quickly sung nI daya rAdA and bring the audience to a meditative state. In fact, I thought Kamalakiran was absolutely masterful in the improvisation for this ragam. The thirteen minutes of vasanthabhairavI ragam from both are worth listening to repeatedly. Sangeetha did render nI daya rAdA - one of the shortest pallavi lines of a kriti and concluded with some elaborate kalpanaswarams.

rItIgowlai always invokes a sense of mercy for me and Sangeetha indeed did that through nannu viDici kadalakurA where Thyagaraja beseeches rAmA not to move away from him and abandon him. Well into a zone of enjoying this concert, I was eagerly awaiting a good raktI ragam and Sangeetha then offered a very powerful AlApanA in kalyANI where she showed her mastery through some brilliant madhyama kAla phrases. Kamalakiran again elevated the whole mood with extremely mellifluous bowing eliciting appreciation from the vocalist many times. Young Kamalakiran, who has played on the Sruti stage many times has really matured into a violinist with depth and nidAnam (deliberation).



Sangeeta Swaminathan at SRUTI concert, March 2017, Delaware Temple

Sangeetha then sang Thyagaraja's majestic E tAvunarA. She brought out all the nuances of kalyANI with the neraval at srI karuDagu tyAgarAja karArcita where she and Kamalakiran exchanged delightful vilamba kAla and madhyama kAla sancharams and kalpanaswarams. The whole rendition of kalyANI was very satisfying and bliss-inducing. The tani followed and what was notable was its length. Vijay Ganesh and Vinay did a great job and played a tani for longer than the song which I felt pushed the norms of a typical Carnatic concert format.

Sangeetha concluded the concert with a Sanskrit kriti namO namo rAghavAya in dEsiya tOdi that is said to be one of Thyagaraja's early compositions. According to a lec-dem by Prof. S. Ramanathan, Thyagaraja is claimed to have composed this song when he was 8 years old actually writing the script on the wall much to his father's delight. All in all, a very satisfying concert of a fine selection of Thyagaraja kritis.

Dinakar Subramanian is a music lover and a long time Sruti supporter.