



SRUTI NOTES

SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society

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From The Editors

Dear friends

With spring almost here and the first Sruti event for the year 2000 approaching, Sruti is preparing for a busy music and dance season. While the Board of Directors is working hard on presenting quality programs of music and dance, the Library Committee (LB) will be busy bringing you news and reviews of events, both at Sruti and elsewhere in the music world. With participation from our readers, we also look forward to making Sruti Notes an active forum for exchange of views and discussions on music and dance related issues.

Besides introducing the new Sruti Committees, this first issue of Sruti Notes for the year brings you news about the upcoming programs and reviews of recent Sruti concerts. Sankaran, a frequent contributor to Sruti Notes, presents reviews of the mini concerts by the two young musicians at the General Body Meeting last December and also his opinion on *Thyagaraja Vaibhavam*, an opera presented at Sruti by Dhananjayan and his troupe in November of last year.

The world of Hindusthani music lost a renowned and revered artiste in the death of Ustad Al-larakha Khan, who passed away recently at Mumbai. An obituary appears in this issue.

We invite our readers to send in their opinions, articles, etc. in the field of music and dance for publication. In the past, we have had very good contributions by a few young members of the Sruti Community to Sruti Notes and Sruti Ranjani, the annual publication. We would very much like to continue the trend by encouraging more youngsters to participate (parents, please encourage!). We would also like to hear about major milestones and achievements in your families (graduations, awards, weddings, arangetrams, etc) that you would like to share with the Sruti Community.

Viji Swaminathan
Chairperson
For the Library Committee

UPCOMING SRUTI PROGRAMS

Thyagaraja Aradhana

April 1, 2000 (See attached flyer for details)

Madurai T.N. Seshagopalan—Vocal

(Saturday - April 29)

Alarmel Valli – Bharatha Natyam

(Saturday - May 13)

Sheikh Subani and Khalisabi Mahaboob – Nadaswaram

(Sunday - June 18)

From the President's Desk

Dear friends,

SRUTI's General Body Meeting on December 4, 1999 elected a new Board to serve for the 2000-01 term. I welcome the new board members and on their behalf, thank the outgoing Board members for their distinguished service to SRUTI. The Board has met with the Transition Committee to complete the orderly transfer of the SRUTI's business affairs to the current board. As indicated in this issue, staffing for both the Library and the Resources Committees is in place. We are deeply appreciative of the continuing and energetic support of the past leadership and the present SRUTI volunteers. It is this commitment that has made SRUTI what it is today.

We are fortunate in having **Sudarsan Padmanabhan**, a disciple of Madurai T. N. Seshagopalan, **Sandhya Srinath**, a disciple of the Lalgudi G. Jayaraman, T. N. Krishnan, and the late V. Janakiraman, and **Sampath Venkatvardhan**, a disciple of Kumbakonam Rajappa Iyer, to perform in the **Thyagaraja Aradhana** this year.

We are delighted to inform you that Sruti's 2000 music season is off to a great start with some of the most well known and sought-after artists of today: **Madurai T.N. Seshagopalan** – Vocal (Saturday - April 29), **Alarmel Valli** – Bharatha Natyam (Saturday - May 13), and **Sheikh Subani and Khalisabi Mahaboob** – Nadaswaram (Sunday - June 18). You will see further details on these programs in this issue.

Please make a note of these events, tell your friends about them, and attend them in large numbers. As you all know, not only do these concerts offer the best that exists in Indian classical music and dance, they also give you the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones. Let us make SRUTI an even greater presence in our community in 2000.

On behalf of the SRUTI Board of Directors,
P. Narayanan
President



Concert Reviews

S. Sankaran

Saxophone Recital by Sumanth Swaminathan

Sumanth Swaminathan's Saxophone concert on Dec. 4, 1999 was a pleasant surprise. I had heard him in April 1999. But during the 7 months in between, he had advanced enormously in his knowledge & technique, by working intensely with his master Kadari Gopalnath in the hot Madras summer and by following it with training from T.N. Bala and his own practice. He carefully selected a set of 5 impressive compositions for the hour, and played them meticulously.

He began the concert with the unique *Navaraga varnam* of Patnam Subramania Iyer and followed it by a *Hamsadwani* krithi on Lord Ganesh much like his master did in *his* last Sruti concert a couple of years ago. The Kalpana swaram in *Hamsadwani* was impressive. This was followed by the major piece of the evening *Endharomahanubhaavulu* of Thyagaraja. This pancharathna kriti which normally requires a ton of practice was handled calmly and dextrously by Sumanth. The *Mukhari* krithi which followed was played well with *Bhava*. He ended the concert with a delightful rendering of *Venkatachala Nilayam* in SindhuBhairavi.

In the last 10 or 20 years, we have witnessed a new phenomenon of young artists, who in their twenties have displayed a level of musical knowledge & imagination normally attained around the age of 40 by earlier generations of musicians. An interesting subset of such musicians have been born & raised in U. S.A. This small group of youngsters take training for a few months each year in India and yet attained a concert standard. One such example is violinist Srikanth Venkataraman of Chicago, who accompanies top grade artists. I am confident that Sumanth Swaminathan is on his way to become the first Saxophonist in U.S.A. to give full length concerts at different places or participate in ensembles in the not too distant future.

Triveni, the Kannada Association, celebrates Purandara Jayanthi at The Hindu Temple, Berlin, NJ, on Feb 26. For info please, call Rajalakshmi S. Ram at 856-751-3795.

Vocal Recital by Srinivas Pisharath

On Dec 4, 1999, Srinivas Pisharath gave a brief concert of 51 minutes, but he sang seven different compositions by seven composers in different languages, which probably is an indication of his extensive repertoire. He began the concert with a Sahana varnam by *Tiruvottiyur Thyagayyar*. He took a few minutes to warm up. After the Varnam he rendered an Arabhi krithi *Narasimha Mamava* of Swathi Thirunal with Alapana, Chittaswaram and Kalpana swaram, which was impressive. Most of the works presented were somewhat rare, except for the third, which was Thyagaraja's *Adamdigala* in Charugesi. Even though he sang it without Alapana or Swaras, the sangathis were rendered fully and faithfully.

The major piece of the evening was *Karunajalarase*, a krithi in Kharaharapriya. The detailed Alapana, and the Violinist's rendering of it were very good. The krithi and the Kalpana swaras in the charanam were rendered with assurance. For some reason, Srinivas did not do Niraval in this krithi or the one he sang in Arabhi. This was followed by three devotional songs by Purandara Dasa, Narayana Thirtha and Mayuram Viswanatha Sastri. The last one was in the Tamil Folk tradition *Kavadichindu*. In all three songs he sang multiple Charanams – for those who like it that way.

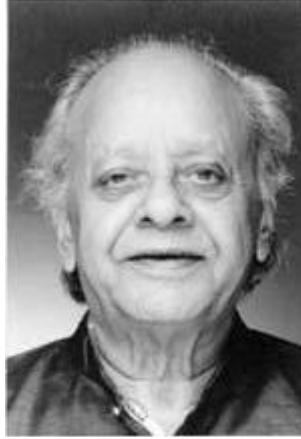


Sruti Concert Recordings

The Library Committee maintains and distributes tapes of Sruti concert recordings to Sruti members and other music lovers. For a list of available tapes and to order, please contact Viji Swaminathan at (215) 643-2145 or e-mail your request to viji_swaminathan@hotmail.com

Ustad Allarakha Khan (1919-2000)

Ustad Allarakha Khan, India's renowned tabla exponent died on Feb 3 at his residence in South Mumbai, following a heart attack. He was 81. He is survived by his wife Bavi Begum, three sons - Zakir Hussain, Fazal Quereshi and Taufiq Quereshi, all leading tabla players - and a daughter Kurshid Aulia (another daughter Razia passed away just the day before his death).



The Ustad was born on April 29, 1919, in the Phagwal village in Jammu. A disciple of Mian Qader Bakshi, the great guru of the Punjab Gharana, Ustad Allarakha was the most celebrated exponent of this style. In his younger days, Allarakha worked in Lahore Radio and later at the All India Radio in Delhi and Bombay. A very versatile artiste, he was equally at home as an accompanist in vocal, instrumental, kathak performances. In many memorable performances, his hands a blur of speed above the tabla, he traded dazzling improvisations with other giants in Hindusthani music such as Ravi Shankar, Vilayat Khan and Ali Akbar Khan. As a soloist, he was a master of improvisation, a prolific composer and a captivating showman. The Ustad popularized the art of tabla playing all over the globe, elevating the status and respect of his instrument.

As part of the "Festival of India" team, Allarakha gave several international performances to promote and project Indian culture. Some of his memorable performances included 'jugalbandis' with artists like Pandit Jasraj, Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Bismillah Khan. His long association with Pandit Ravi Shankar is well-known for its accomplishment of bringing Hindusthani music to the West. He performed with the sitar maestro at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 and at the first Woodstock festival in 1969. He also made a percussion album with the jazz drummer Buddy Rich.

His talent as a composer brought him in touch with the Bombay film industry as a music director for Rangmahal Studios, and he provided music for over 25 films in Hindi and Punjabi.

Ustad Allarakha was the recipient of many awards and titles including Padmashree, the Sangeet Natak Academy Award, the Indo American Achievement Award, The Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar, and recently, the prestigious T. Chowdaiah award, instituted by the Karnataka Government.

In recent years he had devoted much of his time to teaching at his music school, the Alla Rakha Institute of Music, in Bombay.



Write a tribute to Ustad Allarakha!

Voice an opinion! Visit www.sruti.org/bboard/default.asp

Thyagaraja Vaibhavam by Dhananjayan & party

An opinion

The opera *Thyagaraja Vaibhavam* by Dhananjayan and his troupe (Sruti, November 20, 1999) was the most boring one presented by this troupe I have ever seen. The next day, I talked to about 5 or 6 interested persons who witnessed it. So this opinion is not entirely one man's subjective impression. In fact a few of them were immediately reminded of much better Operas such as 'Sanghamitra' etc., brought under the auspices of Sruti.

A few years ago Dhananjayan did a 45 minute mono-acting of the Tamil saint Nandanar's life, which was excellent. The difference between *Thyagaraja Vaibhavam* and the other Operas such as Sanghamitra was that there were some incidents, and some movement etc. in the latter. For example, Nandanar was not just sitting in front of an idol of Siva, praising the Lord. How long can you go on witnessing someone just moving his fingers in front of Rama's idol? Thyagaraja's wife performing the role of a narrator made it even more awkward and artificial.

The singer of the evening rendered a number of Thyagaraja krithis with feeling in a slow tempo, but unfortunately we were not allowed to record it. If we were, we would have had at least an hour of the saint's music sung in a non-concert manner.

I heard that in Cleveland, OH in April 2000, they intend to produce an operatic presentation of Annamayya's life, with Balamurali Krishna in the leading role. That might make sense, because (judging from a movie I saw a few years ago) it seems that Annamayya's life had a lot of incidents - even fist-fights - not to mention two wives who were more interesting than mere 'narrators'.

I shall end this note with a humble suggestion. If there is a choice between two subjects for an opera, and if there is enough time, I would request that the Managing Committee get the choice of the **majority** of the Life members of Sruti by sending one common E-mail. This would give the Life members a sense of participation in Sruti's choice of events and make the organization sound more democratic in function.

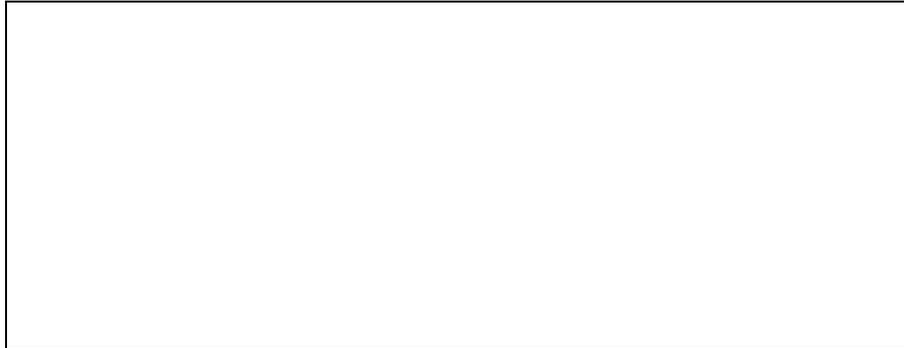
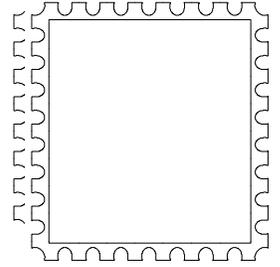
S. Sankaran.



The opinions expressed by the contributors of articles and reviews are published in a spirit of openness of communication and freedom of expression, but do not necessarily reflect the views of Sruti's Board or its members.



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