



SRUTI NOTES

SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society

A Publication of SRUTI

Volume 6, Issue 4 Winter 2003

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Viji Swaminathan
(215)643-2145

Vice President

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215-654-0527

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(Chairman)
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Dinakar Subramanian
610-630-1878

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215-674-9573

Visweswaran Venkatraman
610-918-6388
Sreesudha Palepu
215-412-4201
Kishore Pochiraju
609-716-7620



Email

sruti@sruti.org
Www.sruti.org

FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Friends:

In this winter issue of Sruti Notes, we bring you reviews of the recent concerts of Kadri Gopalnath and O.S. Thyagarajan and a summary report on the workshop on melody and rhythm in Carnatic music by Geetha Ramanathan Bennett and Trichy Sankaran.

The 2004 issue of Sruti Ranjani has also been published and will be available for distribution at the Composers Day on January 4. Articles in the issue include tributes to Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer who passed away on October 31.

This is the last issue from the current Library Committee and on behalf of the Library Committee, I thank all the writers who have contributed articles and reviews for the quarterly newsletter and Sruti Ranjani. Our thanks to advertisers and donors for making it possible to continue bringing out these publications.

Please continue to send us any news of interest to the Sruti community. We also encourage you to visit our website frequently and participate in the discussions.

Thank you.

T. Sarada

For the Library Committee



Upcoming Events

Composers' Day & General Body Meeting

January 4, 2004, Villanova University
(originally scheduled for December 7 and postponed due to inclement weather)
Please see attached flyer for details

Thyagaraja Aradhana

(Date and venue to be announced)

Sarod Concert by

Ali Akbar Khan

accompanied on the tabla by

Swapan Chaudhuri

(rescheduled date and venue to be announced)

From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of the term for the current Board of Directors, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to members of the Board of Directors for their strong support in presenting a variety of successful programs during the last two years. It is very gratifying that the Board members worked wonderfully as a team and shared a deep and genuine interest in the arts, an open mind to explore and present the ever evolving classical arts in all their forms and the enthusiasm to take the Indian classical arts to mainstream platforms. We had quite an eventful year with eight of the ten performances by artists performing at Sruti for the first time.

Members of the Board of Directors worked hard to enhance Sruti's visibility among the people at large and to widen the audience base. Sruti received grants from the Philadelphia Music Project, Dance Advance and the Pennsylvania Council on The Arts which made it possible for us to present highly acclaimed artists in venues which drew diverse audiences. My thanks to Dr. Akkaraju Sarma and Dr. Dinakar Subramanian of the Resources Committee for their help in securing funds.

The long awaited special book publication of Sruti (titled *Sruti Ranjani – Essays on Indian Classical Music and Dance*, published by Xlibris) is finally ready for distribution. The book, work on which was undertaken to commemorate Sruti's fifteenth anniversary two years ago, is a collection of essays related Indian classical music and dance, contributed by many illustrious musicians, musicologists, scholars, dancers and choreographers (including many senior artists such as Pandit Ravi Shankar, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Vidya Shankar, etc). While you can buy both the hardback and paperback editions through any bookstore, they are available at Sruti at a discounted price for members. Please call or email Sruti to receive a copy.

I would like to congratulate and thank the Library Committee for bringing out all the quarterly Sruti Notes and the current issue of Sruti Ranjani. In particular, I would like to mention T. Sarada for undertaking most of the work associated with the publications and P. Swaminathan for editing and producing tapes and CDs of Sruti concerts. The new website designed and being developed by V.V. Raman has been very well received.

I am grateful to the families of the members of the Board for working with us at all the events. On behalf of the Board, I would also like to thank the many Sruti members who have also supported us by helping at events and hosting artists. My special thanks to Mr. S. Sankaran who readily helped whenever needed.

We wish you all a happy new year and hope to see you at the General Body Meeting.

Sincerely,

Viji Swaminathan, President
For the Board of Directors

A Delightful Evening-----

Review of Kadri Gopalnath Concert

Hema Ramamurthy

On September 27th, 2003 we had the pleasure of attending a memorable concert arranged by SRUTI at the Annenberg Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The main artist for the evening was the "Saxophone Chakravarthy" Kadri Gopalnath. He was accompanied on the violin by A.Kanyakumari, on the Thavil by Thenkanikottai Mani and our own Sumanth Swaminathan on the saxophone.

Kadri Gopalnath had his audience captivated all through the concert. His mastery over the instrument, that mesmerized him many years ago at a concert in the Mysore Palace, was strikingly apparent throughout the entire concert. He began the concert with a krithi of Thyagaraja – "Abhishta varada" in Raga Hamsadhvani, followed by a delightful rendering of one of my favorite krithis "Sri Valli Deva" of Papanasam Sivan in Nata Bhairavi. A meditative mood was cast on the audience when Kadri Gopalnath played "Gnana mosaga rAdA" in Poorvikalyani with an apt nerval of "paramAthmudu jEvathmudu", finishing up with a fitting swara kalpana.

The pancharatna krithi "EndarO mahAnubhavulu" of Thyagaraja set to Sri raga was well rendered. Papanasam Sivan's Durga Lakshmi in raga Arabhi followed this krithi. The next selection was ChakkaniRAja in the raga Kharaharapriya was played with all its majestic beauty. The improvisations in the krithi, the elaborate nerval and swara kalpana brought out the nuances of the raga and also reflected on the high level of manodharma that the artist possesses. Kanyakumari followed Kadri Gopalnath with the same vigor and together they made it a very enjoyable Kharaharapriya rendition. The audience welcomed the ever-popular "Raghuvamsha" of Patnam Subramania Iyer in raga Kadana KuthUhalala. Kadri Gopalnath's skill and mastery over the instrument was apparent as a rather detailed rendering of the krithi unfolded with many embellishments and sangathis.

A hauntingly beautiful raga---Chandrakauns was selected for RTP. The selection of the raga in itself was unusual and heightened the expectation of novelty. Chandrakauns, in Karnatak music concerts, is usually used in tukadas to bring a pensive, haunting mood to the concert. It was a sheer pleasure to hear an elaborate version of the raga. Pallavi "ArunAchala nilaya Sri Mahadeva chandrachooda jatAdhara" was played in great detail and included a ragamalika with Valaji, Revathi, Abhogi and BrindAvanasAranga. Thenkanikottai Mani displayed his talent and mastery over the Thavil during the thaniAvarthanam following the RTP. I do have to add though, that the sound of the Thavil was too overwhelming at times, especially considering the size of the auditorium.

A few devarnamas, AnnamAcharya krithi and RAjAji's composition comprised the later part of the concert. The popular krithi of VyAsarAya "Krishna nE bEgane bArO" in Ya-

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

mankalyani, “VenkatAchala nilayam” in Sindubhairavi and BhAgyAda Lakshmi (the concluding piece) in MadhyamAvathi were well received by the audience. RAjAaji’s “Kurai onru mil-lai” in the ragamalika of Sivaranjani, Kapi and Sindubharavi was a great choice and had the audience spellbound with its melody and devotional quality. AnnamAchArya’s “Brahmamu Okati” in the folk style brought out the versatility of the artists.

To sum it up, Kadri Gopalnath and his team, provided the audience with a delightful evening of South Indian Classical music. Aided by his very capable accompanists – A. Kanyakumari and Thenkanikottai Mani, Kadri Gopalnath managed to capture his audience. A special mention has to be made about Sumanth Swaminathan who accompanied him and is a budding saxophone artist. For those of us who have known Sumanth personally, it was a moment of pride to see him accompanying a great stalwart. Following in the footsteps of the great musician and with the able guidance of his teachers we hope to see Sumanth move up in the music field and make a place for himself amongst the doyens of Karnatak music.

[Hema Ramamurthy, a connoisseur of Carnatic and Hindusthani music, is a former member of Sruti’s Library Committee.]

Workshop on Melody and Rhythm in Carnatic Music - A Summary Report

S. Sankaran

On October 11, 2003, Sruti presented lecture/demonstrations on melody and rhythm in Carnatic music by Geetha Ramanathan Bennett and Trichy Sankaran at St. Mary’s Hall, Villanova University. . Geetha is an accomplished veena exponent from La Verne, California and Trichy Sankaran is the Founding Director of Indian Music Studies, and Professor of Music at York University in Toronto, Canada. The presentation was made possible by a grant from the Philadelphia Music Project, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, administered by Settlement Music School.

The first half of the presentation by Geetha Bennett was on the Melodic aspects of Carnatic music (CM), and the second half by Professor Trichy Sankaran was on the Rhythmic patterns of improvisation on the mridangam and their contribution to the total effect of a vocal concert.

Geetha Bennett began well by explaining the concept of ‘Gamaka’, an important & characteristic feature of Carnatic Music, by playing on the Veena, the first line of a familiar minuet by Bach, with and without Gamakas. She then made the following points (among others), by singing melodic improvisations & then playing them on the Veena.

1. Vocal Music is of utmost importance in CM. On instruments we try to reproduce the nuances of Vocal singing. The Veena comes close to the Voice in this process. She could pull more than one note on a string by moving the finger adeptly on the string. The ‘Sitar’ by way of comparison, has frets (which are moveable) and also additional sympathetic strings, producing a rich sound.

2. The Melakartha scheme & the Janya Ragas. The combination of Gamakas on different notes of a Raga in a traditional way is

important to delineate a Raga. These Lakshanas pertaining to each raga are partly explained in books. A Guru teaches the rest orally. In the early part of teaching, Geethams contain a lot of repetitions of the same melodic lines, in order to stress the nature of the Ragas. For this reason they are sometimes called ‘Lakshana Geethams’. This oral tradition has its advantages & disadvantages.

3. The krithis of Thayagaraja typically give the correct picture of the raga right away. He was the first composer to introduce ‘sangathis’ in an elaborate & systematic way as in *Dharini Thelusu Konti*.

Geetha ended her presentation with a short Veena recital, accompanied by Dr. David Nelson (of Wesleyan University, CT) on the Mridangam.

Geetha spent too much time explaining the Melakartha scheme yielding 72 such ragas by combination of different versions of a note such as ‘Ni’, ‘Dha’ etc. and the derivation of *Janya Ragas*. These are explained in basic books used in the teaching of CM. So she did not have time to explain the more intricate aspects of CM, which she had listed in her plan.

Trichy Sankaran (TS), by contrast explained several aspects of the mridangam accompaniment not commonly known to the members of the audience such as the following:

1. Mridangam improvisations had their origin in ‘Thavil’ playing in a devotional setting.

There are two schools of rhythmic accompanists. The Pudukkottai School was initiated by Mamundya Pillai, whose disciples were Muthiah Pillai of Palani and the celebrated Dhakshinamoorthy Pillai. Muthiah Pillai’s son was Palani Subramania Pillai, who was the Guru of TS. The Tanjore School originated with Tanjore Vaidhyanaadha Iyer, who was the Guru of Palghat Mani Iyer.

2. *Layam* is rhythm with some melodic embellishment following the pattern of the singer. Rhythm is specified by the *thala*. *Thalas* are made up of *laghu*, *dhruvatham* and *anudhrutham*. *Laghu* is the essential component of all thalas. Variation in the number of laghus gives rise to ‘jaathi’s such as *thisram*, *chathusram* etc.

3. To illustrate the various ‘anga’s (or parts) of a thala structure, one might use swara sequences or ‘jathi’s, or, ‘sollukkattu’, made up of rhythmic syllables specially suited to mimic the actual sounds produced by playing the mridangam. These rhythmic syllables in Tamil language are not only traditional, but are well suited to express the actual sequence of strokes on the mridangam. Thus ‘sollukkattu’ has become the medium of instruction for drummers. Real experts in sollukkattu recite long rhythmic sequences in this medium. This gives rise to the term ‘Konnakkol’ meaning another (virtual) rhythm instrument.

4. The role of the mridangam player is two fold. One is keeping the rhythm going. The other is accompanying the singer, following his improvisations with a corresponding rhythmic pattern almost like a melodic sequence, adding synergy to the voice and the violin. This important second as-

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(Report on the Workshop, Continued from page 3)

pect is not taught by the guru. It is gained by experience and involves intimate knowledge of the ragas and the individual kritis.

5. *Sarva laghu* is a pattern of easy flow of syllables. This depends on the raga and the 'kaala' or tempo, such as *vilamba kaala*, *dhuritha kaala* etc. Mridangam accompaniment should be unobtrusive, keeping the *Sarva laghu* going.

6. Sanghathis are especially embellished by the drummer trying to follow the melodic patterns produced by the vocalist in a progressive way. Repetition of sangathis gives a chance for starters in mridangam playing to grasp those swara sequences of the particular vocalist and his style.

7. In solo improvisations the mridangam player starts off with a simple rhythmic pattern, develops it, and ends with a complex pattern repeated 3 times. This is called a *mora*. There can be multiple 'mora's in a long solo (or *thani avaradhanam*). The other form or pattern occurring in the 'solo' is called the 'korvai'. Familiarity with such patterns on the part of the listener would help him identify the 'final' *mora* and the ending *korvai* following it.

Prof. Sankaran ended his presentation with a fine solo performance on the mridangam.

[Sankaran, a music enthusiast, is an active volunteer and Life member of Sruti.]

Review of OST's concert

Dinakar Subramanian

I attended O. S. Thyagarajan's vocal concert on November 13, 2003 with great expectations and with visions of a repeat or even a better performance that his performance for Sruti years ago from which *Kaddanuvarki* still rings in my mind. I was curious to see what will unfold.

O. S. Thyagarajan (OST) started off with a short alapana in Hamsadhvani followed by *Vandeham Jagath Vallabham*, a composition of Annamacharya in Khandachapu. This song was very briskly done and gave a good warm-up to both the violinist Delhi SundarRajan and the mridangist Neyveli Narayanan. OST also indulged in kalpanaswaras for this song and I found him trip a little with the Thalam during this phase.

Then OST rendered a very lilting Khamas in the form of *Sujana Jeevana Rama Suguna Bhooshana*, a Thyagaraja composition in Rupakam. I thought OST brought out the essence of Khamas very well and made it very enjoyable. Thyagaraja's *Needayaraada* in Vasantha Bhairavi was next which was done very crisply.

After this OST started a serious alapana in Yadukulakamboji which showed everyone what OST is famous for – classicism. OST made this alapana quite memorable even though Yadukulakamboji can tend to become repetitive. *Hecharikaga rara* which followed was very beautifully done. Neraval and kalpanaswarams followed which were also quite captivating. I noticed a few apaswarams during the kalpanaswarams which was rather disturbing coming from OST.

A minor but interesting incident occurred at the end of this song. A spotlight was shining on OST until that time and

someone asked him if he needed the spotlight and he replied in Tamil "spotlightey vendaam" which when translated loosely says – 'I don't ever want the spotlight' which caused a bit of chuckle in the auditorium allowing each one interpret this statement to their liking.

OST then presented a very masterful and soulful Keeravani for more than twenty minutes which I am sure reinforced in everyone that he is an epitome of real classical music sans flash. This was a masterpiece. Delhi SundarRajan also performed equally to bring forth the beauty of Keeravani. It was one of the situations where OST brought out the best in the violinist.

When everyone was wondering if it was going to be *Kaligi-yunte*, OST sang a very beautiful song *Saamagaana Priyakaram* by Guru Surajananda replete with quite a bit of Chittaswarams. There was no Kalpanaswarams for this song. For the kind of buildup that was given through the alapana, I thought that a more elaborate treatment could have been given to this song or a different song could have been selected but then this is what OST decided to perform.

Next was a very brisk *Sudha Maadhurya Bhaashini*, which is a composition of G. N. Balasubramaniam. This was a composition in Ragam Vandana Darini and showed OST's control of briga.

OST then started on an elaborate alapana in Shubhapantuvrali where he brought out the somber mood of this raga. He tried Sruti Bedham which I felt was a bit incomplete and could have been developed further. There were a few lapses in sruti as well, which was unfortunate. SunderRajan performed admirably on this alapana. Overall a good start to what most people were expecting in this raga – *Shri Satyanarayanam* by Muthuswami Dikshithar and OST rendered it very beautifully.

Kalpanaswarams immediately followed without any neraval and ended up with a very competent Thani Aavarthanam by Neyveli Narayanan.

In the tukkkada phase of the concert, OST sang the *Gayathi Vanamali* in Ragam Durga composed by Sadasiva Brahmendra which was followed by two songs by Gopalakrishna Bharathi. The first was *Kandaen Kalitheerndhaen* in Mohana Kalyani which was quite mediocre in its rendering. The second was the popular *Sabapathikku* in Aabhogi, which he started with the Anupallavi. This was very succinct and well rendered. OST then sang *Thungaa Theera* in Salaga Bhairavi and finished with the brisk *Naadupai Balikeru* in Madhyamvati. The Madhyamavati piece was very good and OST promptly finished the concert with the Mangalam.

Overall, I was a little disappointed with the concert but the Shubha Pantuvrali will still be ringing in my ears for some-time.

[Dinakar Subramanian is a former president of Sruti and a frequent contributor to Sruti publications.]

Welcome New Members

We are very happy to welcome the following new Life members of Sruti:

Sreemati & Tirthankar Ghosh, Orelan, PA.

Kala Menon, Wynnewood, PA.

SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society

Composers Day & General Body Meeting

Sunday, January 4, 2004

St Mary's Hall, Villanova University, Villanova, PA

(see reverse for directions)

GENERAL BODY MEETING

(9:30 am - 12 pm)

Agenda

- President's remarks
- Reports from the Board, Resource and Library Committees
- Amendments to the constitution
- Questions and answers
- Election of Board of Directors

LUNCH

12 pm - 1 pm

The General Body Meeting and lunch are open to Sruti members only. Those who would like to become members at the time may also attend.

To All Members

Your involvement, input and suggestions are very important in helping the Board of Directors and other committees to serve you better. We hope to see you all at the meeting.

COMPOSERS DAY

(1:00 pm - 6:00 pm)

PROGRAM

1:00 pm - 3:30pm Presentations by local groups of singers.

A limited time is available for individual participation and registration will be accepted on a first come- first served basis.

To register, please call 215-643-2145 or email sruti@sruti.org.

3:30pm - 3:45pm Intermission -Refreshments



Carnatic Flute Concert

V.K. Raman

Jay Shankar Balan - violin

Mali Santhanakrishnan - mridangam

3:45 pm-6 pm

'Surmani' Mysore V.K. Raman, one of the leading flutists in the Carnatic style of music, started learning flute at the age of nine from Sri A.V.Prakash and started giving full-fledged concerts at the age of fifteen. Since then Raman has performed in many prestigious organizations in India and abroad. Raman has had the privilege of performing flute duets along with his guru, the great flute maestro Dr.N.Ramani.

Enchanting and transcendent music flows from Raman's flute as he has mastered blowing and fingering techniques to achieve a superb tonal quality. He plays krithis in *Gayaki* (vocal) style, combining it with the unique mind-boggling possibilities of his instrument.

Raman has performed Jugalbandhis and fusion concerts and has been very successful as a music composer. He is a 'Grade I composer' and 'A Grade Artiste' of All India Radio and Doordarshan. He has written scores for many audio / video albums, CD's and dance/theatre productions in India and abroad.

Jay Shankar Balan hails from a family of musicians. He learnt violin from Alamelu Subramanian and later from T.S.Krishnaswamy and N.S.Chandra-shekar in Bombay. Presently he is under the guidance of Madurai Sundar. He has worked with all major stalwarts, including T.N.Seshagopalan, Yesudas, Nedunuri Krishnamoorthy, Ravi Kiran and others.

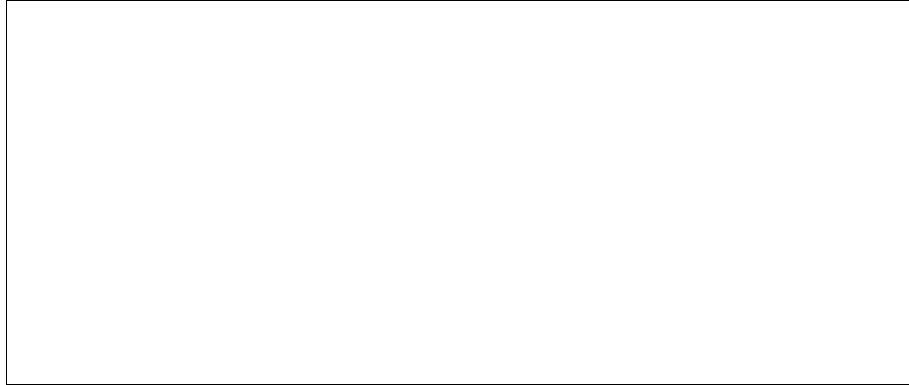
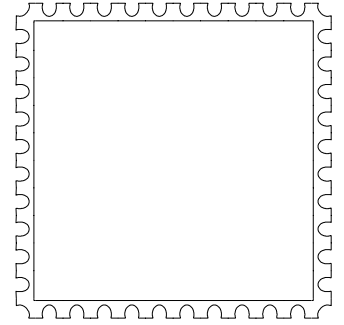
Jay Shankar Balan was invited to perform at the United Nations in Paris for the last UN meeting of the century in 1999 along with Dr Yesudas. He is a graded artist of AIR and has represented India in major cultural festivals including Festival of India in Russia and Middle East. He holds a Masters in Computer Science and a MBA in International Finance and is settled in Michigan.

Mali Santhanakrishnan is a disciple of Sri P. Srinivasa Iyer of Madras, a retired A. I.R. artist, who is a disciple of the illustrious Padmashree Palghat T.S. Mani Iyer. Mali's forte is his seamless accompanying style that supports and embellishes the main artist's rendering of the compositions. He has also taken advanced lessons from Padmashri Palghat R. Raghu, when Sri Raghu visited the US. Mali has accompanied many local artists as well as several renowned senior visiting artists from India. He has also performed in fusion concerts, notably with Sri Sandip Burman.



SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society
1436 Joel Drive
Ambler, PA 19002



Directions to St. Mary's Hall, Villanova University

(Map and directions also available on www.villanova.edu)

St. Mary's Hall is located at the intersection of County Line Road and PA Rt. 320 (Spring Mill Rd).

From the West: Take the Pennsylvania Turnpike to Exit 24 (Valley Forge/Route 76). Take Route 76 East to the Gulph Mills Exit. At the bottom of the exit ramp, turn right onto Route 320. Follow Route 320 South. At the third traffic light, turn right onto Matsonford Road. At the intersection of Matsonford Road and County Line Roads (about 1.4 miles) turn left onto County Line Road. St. Mary's Hall is just before the first traffic light. Go past the traffic light and turn right into the parking lot. Park at the far end of this lot and St. Mary's is across the parking lot.

From the South: Take I-95 North to exit 7, the I-476 (the Blue Route) Interchange. Continue on I-476 North to exit 13 (old exit 5), St. David/Villanova (US Rt. 30). Follow Rt. 30 East. Turn left onto Rt. 320. St. Mary's Hall is on the left just before the first traffic light which is County line road. Turn right at the light to County line Road. On county line road turn right into the parking lot. Park at the far end of this lot and St. Mary's is across the parking lot.

From the North and East: Take the NJ Turnpike to exit 6, the PA Turnpike. Continue on the PA Turnpike to the I-476 (the Blue Route) Interchange. Follow I-476 South to exit 13 (old exit 5), St. David/Villanova (US Rt. 30). Follow Rt. 30 East. Turn left onto Rt. 320. St. Mary's Hall is on the left just before the first traffic light which is County line road. Turn right at the light to County line road. On county line road turn right into the parking lot. Park at the far end of this lot and St. Mary's is across the parking lot.

By Train: From Philadelphia's AMTRAK 30th Street Station: Board SEPTA Regional Rail Line (#R5 This train makes stops approx. every 60 minutes on weekends at the Villanova Campus.

