



# SRUTI NOTES

A Publication of SRUTI  
The India Music & Dance Society  
Celebrating Twenty-one years of service to the community

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Volume 10, Issue 2, August 2007

## **President's Note**

Greetings

The Spring 2007 season saw SRUTI present a very diverse and high profile set of programs including showcasing us at the prestigious Kimmel Center in Philadelphia. We kicked off the year seeking to create a core support base that would help overcome annual program deficits and also lay the foundation for a strong financial base to help sustain the organization in the years to come. The program deficits have been caused by a combination of rising costs and inadequate ticket sales. Typically, concert day ticket sales only account for 20% of the income!!!! The rest comes from grants, core supporters, season passes and profits from tape sales. Sixteen families signed up for the core supporter program, pledging to annually contribute at least \$500. The core supporters were offered admission and preferred seating for the entire family to all events including the premium presentations and in addition concert tapes wherever available were offered. Also a portion (minimum of \$250) was determined to be tax deductible. We sincerely appreciate the support we have received from those who have availed of this opportunity to support SRUTI's mission. We hope to raise this support base to at least 25 families this coming year and encourage you to come forward and sign up enthusiastically. In addition, we sold nearly 50 season passes.

The Tyagaraja Aradhana was celebrated with a lot of gusto and a very festive atmosphere pervaded throughout the day on March 3, 2007. A large group of singers rendered the Utsava Kritis and the Pancharatna Kritis and the day was off to a flying start. The board acknowledges with gratitude the tireless efforts of Prabha Subramaniam and Kiranavali Vidyasankar who trained and led the Utsava Kriti and Pancharatna group respectively. Over 50 kids and 20 adults presented individual/group songs paying homage to Saint Tyagaraja. The concert of the day was a Veena recital by Jaya Shekar of Malaysia accompanied on the mridangam by Laxmisha Shridhar and on the Ghatam by Sriram Balasubramanian.

The first concert of the season, an orchestra presentation by the Jayamangala group from Maryland did not live up to the hype and expectation of a high energy and coordinated rendering. Murphy's Law seemed to work really well that day as an unusual and huge snow storm took the Delaware Valley by surprise, forcing the Montgomery County Community College authorities to close the campus citing safety concerns. We were bailed out in the last minute by the kind and gracious board of directors of the Bharatiya Temple who made instant adjustments to the temple events scheduled for that day in order to accommodate our program.

Our biggest event of the year was a sort of several firsts for Sruti. In concert was the popular Sitarist and Tabla soloist, Ustad Shafaatullah Khan of King of Prussia PA. It was the first time Sruti presented on its own an event at the prestigious Kimmel Center in Philadelphia. The event drew one of the most diverse audiences to a Sruti event and was a proud moment for the board to see the Sruti Banner shining in the backdrop of the Kimmel stage. A young and energetic group of kids from the Mansfield University led by its conductor Dr. Kenneth Sarch provided orchestra accompaniment and it was a treat to watch them blend Tilak Kamod with an array of western instruments. The audience seemed very receptive to the concept and we got a lot of feedback about the lack of greater opportunities for the orchestra to perform in the presentation.

## Concert Reviews

### Jayamangala Orchestra, March 2007

Not missing to present a traditional Carnatic Music event, we commemorated the memory of the famed duo singers – Alathur Brothers with a presentation of songs popularized by the brothers. In concert that day were the Carnatica Brothers – Shashikiran and Ganesh with great accompaniments – Nagai Sriram on Violin and Murugabhupathy on Mridangam. Preceding the concert was a very informative session on various aspects of Pallavi singing, presented by the acclaimed musical wizard and guru – Chitravina Narasimhan, who was ably supported by Kiranavali Vidyasankar, Shashikiran and Ganesh.

We were also treated to three wonderful chamber concerts by young artists from India. Vidya Kalyanaraman and Dharini Kalayanaraman presented two separate vocal concerts with superb accompaniment by Sudha Iyer on the Violin and Rajana Swaminathan on the Mridangam. A father-son duo – B.K. Anantha Ram and Amith A Nadig presented a nearly four hour flute concert of several popular compositions and ragas. Arun Ramamurthy on the Violin and Renuka Prasad on the mridangam provided a perfect balance to an all-round effort by the team.

Sreyashi Dey, Vishnu Tattava Das, Sohini Ray and Sanjib Bhattacharya presented a very colorful and graceful Odissi and Manipuri Dance program on June 5, 2007, concluding our regular program presentations for the spring/early summer. The fall season offers much more traditional fare, including three Carnatic vocal concerts – Hyderabad Brothers, Bombay Jayashree, and Malladi Brothers. Also scheduled is a short thematic Kuchipudi presentation on Mahishasura Mardhini led by the renowned dancer Pasumarthy Satyanaryana.

Two immediate challenges that continue to seek solutions include increasing the audience and the financial support base. Missing from our support line up are corporate sponsorships. With a growing breed of successful Indian entrepreneurs and managed businesses, it is foreseeable to expect a new line of support from such sources. We attempted to encourage kids and adults learning music to avail of discounts to attend concerts. By some reckoning, there are probably at least over 100 families in the Delaware Valley whose kids are learning music and dance. Nearly 30 teachers are listed in the SRUTI Database of music and dance teachers in the area. We would like our community music and dance teachers to encourage their students' families, particularly the children, to attend all SRUTI concerts. Nothing like experiencing live music or dance first hand.

We look forward to meeting you again this fall at all the SRUTI events.

Sincerely,

**Ramana Kanumalla,**  
**President**

The Jayamangala Group presented a concert on March 17, 2007, billed as a symphony orchestra. The group included a number of vocalists and instrumentalists trained in Carnatic music performing along with instrumentalists and sopranos trained in Western classical and jazz music. Most of the musicians participating in the ensemble live in the United States and range from students and amateurs to performers in the professional circuits. Prof. T. R. Subramanyam, a highly respected musician and musicologist from India, was designated as the conductor of the evening's concert, a role that he performed seated on a chair on one side of the stage. SRUTI took the opportunity to start the program by felicitating and honoring the octogenarian. Kiranavali Vidyasankar introduced Prof. Subramanyam to the Philadelphia audience and in her brief speech, described his achievements in and contributions to the world of Carnatic music.

The fates seemed to be conspiring against everybody on the day of the concert. March 17<sup>th</sup> was the day of one of the worst winter storms in the region, with snow, ice and sleet covering the roads in ample measure. The originally booked auditorium at Montgomery County Community College was therefore unavailable and the organizers had to shift the program venue at the last minute to the Bharatiya Temple hall in Montgomeryville. The storm also resulted in thin attendance and a delayed start to the program. Not only the members of the audience, but also most performers in the Jayamangala group were driving in on the same day and had to be redirected to the new venue.

While the weather gods could be blamed for problems in logistics and for dampening everyone's spirits, they certainly could not be held accountable for the content of the program itself. Much of the program was patterned on the lines of a traditional Carnatic music concert, with raga alapana, kalpana swaras etc. However, I believe the group was mistaken in its attempt to provide opportunities to each vocalist and instrumentalist to be heard individually, especially as the performers on stage were inevitably at very different stages of musical training and capability. While no one musician got enough of a chance to exhibit his or her talent sufficiently well, the overall group presentation suffered in the process. For example, in Tyagaraja's composition, Bhavanuta in Mohanam, most of the swarams had to be presented at the end by one vocalist, with the instruments taking turns for accompaniment. As all the vocalists sang the compositions together and again converged in the final stages of the swaram singing, this resulted in substantial dynamic imbalances in sound levels and quality.

The main piece in the group's presentation featured what can only be described as free verse in Sanskrit, describing the various seasons and set to music by the leaders of the Jayamangala group. The convergence of lyrics, rhythm and melodies sounded uncomfortable to this reviewer's ears. Perhaps, on a sunnier day, one could have appreciated it better, but on

that particular day, the unfamiliarity of the lyrics only added to the discomfiting feeling of sitting through a highly labored presentation. For the most part, the performers on the Western instruments also ended up either mimicking the roles of the string and percussion instruments in a Carnatic music concert, or providing the kind of background music that has now become an integral part of light versions of Indian music. The two Western sopranos got a few minutes to pitch in once in a while, with some minimal harmonizing, but there was no true blending of authentic elements of Carnatic and Western music. At the end of the day, this resulted in a seeming medley of disparate pieces of music that did not fit into a seamless whole.

Indian music, with its emphasis on creative exposition and improvisation based on melody, shines only under individual performers, with pride of place given to vocal music. All instruments only take on accompanying roles. Conversely, Western symphonies, with an emphasis on composed musical scores based on harmony, thrive when presented by a large group of instrumentalists performing under the baton of a conductor. Very few instruments take on a purely accompanying role in this context. Moreover, vocal music in the Western classical tradition is not usually an element of a symphonic orchestral presentation. Marrying such highly different traditional musical visions and creating new music that has intrinsic value and integrity should not be undertaken lightly. As such, the Jayamangala group can be said to have taken a small first step in their attempt. This reviewer hopes they continue to search for authentic artistic vision and direction, and give better shape to any future performance. Their task is, of course, additionally difficult as many of the individual musicians live in cities separated by a few hundred miles. However, the greater the challenge, the more rewarding the effort, if they can make it work and produce good music out of it.

*The author of the above review wishes to remain anonymous.*

### **River of Strings – Shafaatullah Khan and the Mansfield Orchestra**

SRUTI, The India Music and Dance Society, presented a music ensemble on April 20, 2007, in the Kimmel Center. This program was different from the usual traditional classical music concerts presented by Sruti in the past. The program was titled River of Strings - a music ensemble by Shafaatullah Khan and his group. We went to the concert hoping to listen to the ensemble from the beginning to the end. However, the program started with a Tabla solo by Ustad Shafaatullah Khan, accompanied by Pundit Ramesh Mishra on Sarangi and Nick Vicante and Suraj Roychowdhry on Tanpura. Shafaatullah started with Vilambit in 16 beats. There was a display of vigorous beats followed by slow movements also called Peshkar. While the Sarangi provided the requisite background, the Ustad showed his virtuosity with fingering. Following an eloquent rendering of notes on Sarangi by Pundit Mishra, the Ustad vocalized the beats, which is similar to the “Konnakkol” of Carnatic Music. This

was then translated into various Tala compositions of past masters. Finally a composition of his own in nine different notes was played by him. One of these was for a dance followed by a four beat tal.

Shafaatullah is known more for his accomplishments on sitar than on Tabla. It was not clear to us why he chose to demonstrate his prowess on Tabla even though the main title of the program was the “River of Strings” featuring him on Sitar. During the second half of the concert, Shafaatullah Khan along with the Mansfield Orchestra, conducted by Kenneth Sarch, presented “The River of Strings”. He chose the popular Tilak Kamod Raga for improvisation. The presentation was such that Shafaatullah improvised the Raga on the Sitar following the traditional Hindustani style. For this, he was accompanied by his student Amod Dandawate on the Tabla. Kenneth Sarch and the Mansfield orchestra then improvised the same following the western classical style. It was very interesting to listen to the adaptation of the Hindustani Raga by the Mansfield orchestra and to observe how the orchestra interacted and blended with the Hindustani musicians. Indeed, there were many occasions when we felt that Mansfield orchestra excelled in their presentation. Kudos to Mansfield orchestra and Shafaatullah Khan for their great effort.

This is the first time we witnessed a concert with an orchestra trained in western classical music adapting and improvising a traditional Hindustani Raga. It is always interesting to observe the novel ways in which traditional Indian classical music is adapted by completely different musical groups like the Mansfield orchestra. In the past, several great musicians like Pandit Ravishankar, Yehudi Menuhin, the Beatles, Ali Akbar Khan etc. have presented fusion musical concerts under the title “East meets West”. Although we have not witnessed any of those concerts in person, we have listened to the recordings of those concerts. Compared to such great performances, the presentation of the “River of Strings” seems a relatively humble attempt. Shafaatullah Khan and his party have a long way to go in perfecting their techniques. They should also strive hard to start the concert on time. The following guidelines are our suggestions for future events. It is very important that such large presentations should be extremely well rehearsed in advance and all the preparations like stage set up, instrumental tuning and stage arrangements should be completed within the time frame announced in the program notes. There is absolutely no excuse for delaying the concerts because artists were not ready with their musical instruments and the instruments were not tuned properly etc.

*T. Parasaran, Ph.D. and P. Swaminathan, Ph.D.*

# SRUTI

## Announces

### A Unique Musical Workshop

#### Navagraha Kritis of Muthuswami Dikshitar

#### Instructor: Kiranavali Vidyasankar

Muthuswami Dikshitar, one of the members of the famed Trinity of Carnatic music, composed many sets of compositions, arranged according to various themes. The most well-known among these are the Navavarana Kritis and the Navagraha Kritis. Under the auspices of SRUTI, Kiranavali Vidyasankar, well-known Carnatic musician and resident of Lansdale, PA, will be conducting a unique workshop on the Navagraha Kritis of Dikshitar. The workshop will consist primarily of live lessons in three grouped sessions (Sep 21-23, Sep 28-30 and Oct 5-7). In addition, various noteworthy features of the nine compositions will be described and discussed, covering lyrical, melodic and rhythmic aspects of these compositions. The workshop will be open to all music lovers and students.

**Please contact Ramana Kanumalla (610 322 3180) for full details.**

#### “CLASSICAL MANIPURI DANCES OF INDIA” AT HAVERFORD AND BRYN MAWR COLLEGES

The internationally renowned Padmashri Darshana Jhaveri & Group will offer lectures and demonstrations in “Classical Manipuri Dances of India,” Sept. 9-12, 2007 at Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges as part of their current U.S. tour.

A free performance of Manipuri Dance will be held on Sunday, Sept. 9 at 4:30 p.m. in the Marshall Auditorium of Haverford College’s Roberts Hall, followed by lecture-demonstrations on Monday, Sept. 10 (4:15 p.m. in Haverford College’s Chase Auditorium), Tuesday, Sept. 11 (7:30 pm, in Bryn Mawr College’s Goodhart Music Room) and Wednesday, Sept. 12 (7 p.m. in Room 313 of Haverford’s Whitehead Campus Center). For more information, please call 610 516 5210.

Originating from the Northeastern region of India, Manipuri dance is characterized by its own distinctive movement, vocabulary, costuming and musical traditions. It is one of the most lyrical and graceful classical dance styles of India. Dance and music are integral to the social and religious lives of the Manipuri people. The dances in Manipur are a combination of ancient rituals and devotional *Vaishnavite* dances. Drums and cymbal dances are interwoven into the performances.

Padmashri Darshana Jhaveri, a classical Manipuri dancer, research scholar, and teacher, is one of the four internationally renowned Jhaveri Sisters, whose names have become synonymous with Manipuri Dance. She studied with Guru Bipin Singh, who directed the dance and music for the group’s performances. Jhaveri has been performing with her sisters in India and abroad since 1958. Jhaveri has received many honors and awards including the National Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and the Padmashri (prestigious civilian award from the President of India). More information can be found at [www.darshanajhaveri.com](http://www.darshanajhaveri.com), is presented under the auspices of Battery Dance Company with travel support from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. The group’s Haverford/Bryn Mawr performances and lectures are sponsored by Haverford’s John B. Hurford ’60 Humanities Center and the Bryn Mawr College Dance Program. All events are free and open to the public. For more information, please contact James Weissinger at (610) 795-6518 or [jweissin@haverford.edu](mailto:jweissin@haverford.edu).



# SRUTI

**The India Music and Dance Society**

1783 Talbot Road, Blue Bell, PA 19422 • [www.sruti.org](http://www.sruti.org)

**Presents**  
**A Vocal Concert**  
**by**  
**Hyderabad Brothers**



**Accompanists**

**S. Varadarajan, Violin and K. V. Prasad, Mridangam**

**Saturday, September 15, 2007**

**4:00 PM**

*at Calvary Vision Center*

*550 E. Township Line Rd., Suite 200, Blue Bell, PA*

Tickets: Members \$15, Non-members \$20, Seniors and Students \$10.

For more information, contact Ramana at (610) 322-3180, Srinivas at (215) 364-2089,  
Venkat at (610) 631-2291, or Nataraj at (610) 687-4565

## About the Artistes

**The Hyderabad Brothers, D. Seshachari and D. Raghavachari**, hail from a family of musicians. Their initial training was under the guidance of their father, the Late Sangeetha Sahitya Vidwan, Daroor Ratnamacharyulu, and their mother, D. Sulochana Devi. Later, Shri Raghavachary alone had training under Shri Susarla Sivaram, at the Government College of Music and Dance in Hyderabad, whose idiom and style, the brothers have evolved. The Hyderabad Brothers have performed in all major institutions, festivals, and sabha-s in India and have won numerous plaudits from critics and rasika-s. They have performed at the Madras Music Academy, Krishna Gana Sabha, Mylapore Fine Arts Club, Indian Fine Arts Society and the Kalasagaram Music Circle. They have given numerous radio and television concerts for All India Radio and Doordarshan TV. They have performed extensively in India and have toured North America several times. They have won several awards and titles from many reputed institutions. The Music Academy in Madras honoured them as The Best Vocalists for three consecutive years - 1990, 1991 and 1992. They were also given the Yogam Award by The Music Academy in 1992. In 1993, The Music Academy gave them The Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer Award for the best rendering of rare Thyagaraja kriti-s. They have been honoured by the prestigious Krishna Gana Sabha as the best vocalists in 1988, 1990 and 1991.

**S. Varadarajan**, a highly accomplished violinist from Chennai, started learning violin at the age of nine from Sri Kanchi Janardhanam. He has been receiving advanced training from Sri T. V. Gopalakrishnan for more than 15 years. He played his first Concert at the age of 12 and has since been accompanying various artists in all Sabhas in Chennai and all over India, and in concert tours all over the world. He has accompanied well-known musicians such as T V Gopalakrishnan, K V Narayanaswami, T N Seshagopalan, T V Sankaranarayanan. He was conferred with the title of *Yuva Kala Bharathi* by Bharat Kalachar in 1999, Best Junior Violinist in the Music Festival conducted by Academy of Indian Music & Arts and Narada Gana Sabha in 1989, Spirit of Youth Award for Best Violin Artist from Music Academy in 1989, Best Senior Violinist Prize in 1999, 2000 & 2001.

**K. V. Prasad**: A top rank mridangist with Chennai AIR, K V Prasad is a versatile artiste. He plays tabla, western drums, Congo drums, chenda and edakka. He began to learn mridangam at the age of seven under Ernakulam Narayana Iyer. Later, he got advanced training from Parassala Ravi and Sangeetha Kalanidhi, Dr T K Murthy. From 1985, Prasad has been accompanying leading artistes like Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Dr Balamuralikrishna, Madurai T N Seshagopalan, and others. He has won titles like Kalaimamani and Asthana Vidwan, Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam. He has won several awards.

## Directions to Calvary Vision Center, 550 East Township Line Rd., Blue Bell, PA.

### FROM PHILADELPHIA AND SOUTH:

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Follow Germantown Pike West (1mi)  
(Pass the Plymouth Meeting Mall, go up the hill)  
Turn RIGHT onto Walton Rd  
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Make the first LEFT into Calvary Vision Center  
Church entrance is suite 200 - the glass wall around the back of the building

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Turn slight left at the ramp toward Norristown  
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**Presents**  
**A Vocal Concert**  
**by**  
**Bombay Jayashri**



**Accompanists**

**H. N. Bhaskar, Violin and J. Vaidyanathan, Mridangam**

**Saturday, September 29, 2007**

**4:00 PM**

*at Calvary Vision Center*

*550 E. Township Line Rd., Suite 200, Blue Bell, PA*

This program is supported by a grant from the Philadelphia Music Project, an artistic initiative of the Pew Charitable Trusts, administered by the University of Arts.

Tickets: Members \$15, Non-members \$20, Seniors and Students \$10.

For more information, contact Ramana at (610) 322-3180, Srinivas at (215) 364-2089,

Venkat at (610) 631-2291, or Nataraj at (610) 687-4565

## About the Artistes

**Bombay Jayashri:** Born into a family of musicians with rich lineage and steeped in pedigree music, Bombay Jayashri Ramnath represents the fourth generation of music practitioners in her family. Jayashri has been groomed under the guidance of the legend Shri Lalgudi G Jayaraman and Smt. T R Balamani. Jayashri, today not only bears the torch of the Lalgudi tradition, but has also evolved a distinct style of her own. With a career extending over two decades, Jayashri is today among the most sought after Carnatic musicians. Her work has won her the acclaim of prestigious institutions in the form of prestigious awards such as the Sangeetha Choodamani and Nadabhooshanam. Jayashri's repertoire of meditative music and rare poetry are best experienced through her compositions in her albums. She has also composed music for dance ballets and documentaries. In this manner, Jayashri has deployed the essence of the classical idiom most effectively in her search for avenues beyond the concert format. More recently, she has harnessed her skills towards composing music as a powerful catalyst in promoting our rich legacy in literature and other art forms which opens up new vistas for exploring her creative instincts. Her recent composition for the operatic ballet based on the Tamil Epic - 'Silapadhikaaram' is an example of this. In her voyage as a cultural ambassador of India's rich heritage, Jayashri has performed extensively in India and abroad in the most prestigious fora, drawing critical acclaim wherever she performed.

**Mysore H N Bhaskar** a grade 'A' Violinist of All India Radio is the son and disciple of Sri H K Narasimha Murthy and H N Rajlakshmi. He began his training in violin at the age of eight. Performing since the tender age of twelve he has made a significant impression on great musicians like Dr N Ramani, T V Sankaranarayanan, T N Seshagopalan to name a few. After moving to Chennai, Bhaskar is under the able guidance of the violin maestro Sangeetha Kalanidhi Sri M S Gopalakrishnan. Bhaskar is an appreciated artist regularly appearing on popular television programs to exhibit the serene notes created by his violin. Presently Bhaskar is accompanying all the leading and popular musicians of the day, traveling all over the world.

**J. Vaidyanathan:** A scion of a famous musical family, Vaidyanathan is the son of Sangitha Kalanidhi Late Shri D.K.Jayaraman. He had advanced training from Sangitha Kalanidhi, Shri T.K.Murthy. Recipient of several prizes and awards, Vaidyanathan has accompanied many famous musicians of an earlier generation such as Smt. M.S. Subbalakshmi, Smt. D.K. Pattammal, Smt. M.L. Vasanthakumari, Shri D.K.Jayaraman, Shri S. Ramanathan, Shri K.V. Narayanaswamy, Shri B.Rajam Iyer, Shri T.N.Krishnan, Shri M.S.Gopalakrishnan. He now regularly accompanies many top ranking artists of S. India. He has given performances in U.S.A., USSR, Singapore, Muscat.

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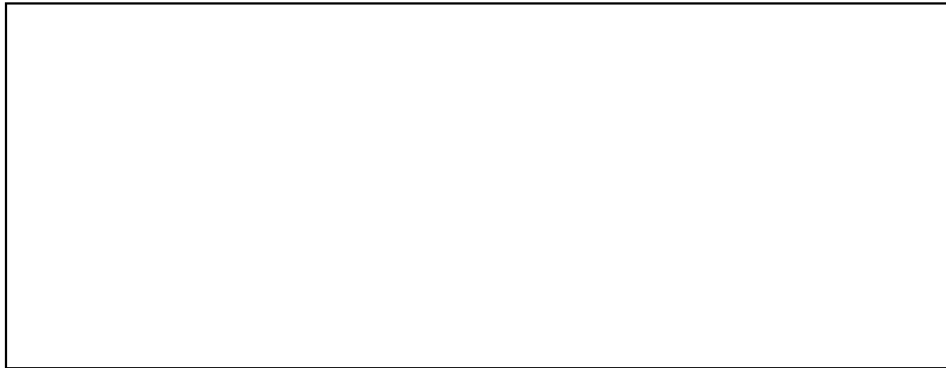


SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society

1783 Talbot Road Road

Blue Bell, PA 19422



### **Upcoming SRUTI Events — 2007**

- 1) Sat, Sep 15, 4 pm    Hyderabad Brothers, Carnatic Vocal, Calvary Vision Center,  
550 E. Township Line Road, Suite 200, Blue Bell, PA
- 2) Sat, Sep 29, 4 pm    Bombay Jayashri, Carnatic Vocal, Calvary Vision Center,  
550 E. Township Line Road, Suite 200, Blue Bell, PA
- 3) Sat, Nov 17, 2 pm    Double Header — “Mahishasura Mardini”, Kuchipudi Dance  
Ballet, followed by Malladi Brothers, Carnatic Vocal,  
Calvary Vision Center, 550 E. Township Line Road, Suite  
200, Blue Bell, PA
- 4) Sat, Dec 8, 2 pm    SRUTI Day — General Body Meeting, Elections and  
Concerts by local artists, Venue TBA