



SRUTI NOTES

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FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Friends,

Hope your summer was restful and you are ready for updates from Sruti. In this current issue, we bring you a note from the President and some details of the Composers' Day event that Sruti is planning in November 2008. For your reading pleasure, we have reviews of concerts from Spring 2008. I would like to thank Mrs. Rajee Padmanabhan, Mrs. Revathi Subramony, and Mr. P. Swaminathan for taking the time to write these reviews. Enclosed, are also flyers of upcoming concerts for the next few months.

We would strongly urge new members to share their views with the Sruti community. Please contact me if you have an interest in writing a review for any of the upcoming Fall concerts.

Vijaya Viswanathan

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear Friends:

I hope you had a good summer break in the US, India or elsewhere; welcome back! I think you are in for a treat this fall with our line-up of excellent concerts.

Since I last wrote to you we have had some outstanding concerts by accomplished artists. On April 26th, we were treated to a wonderful veena concert by Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh. She was accompanied by Shiram Brahmanandam on the mridanga and Sriram Balasubramanian on the ghata. It has indeed been many years since Sruti has had a veena concert. A vocal concert of the highest caliber by Smt. M. S. Sheela was held on May 10th expertly accompanied by Sandhya Srinath on the violin and Anoor Anantha Krishna Sharma on the mridanga. It was certainly a concert to remember in the classical tradition rendered enthusiastically over almost four hours.

A unique nadaswaram concert by Kasim and Babu, grandchildren of Dr. Sheikh Chinna Moulana was held on June 7th and the audience was treated to a long and festive concert. We had a chamber concert on May 24th in collaboration with Villanova Indian Students Association. This was a lecture and demonstration by Smt. Subhashini Parthasarathy and Smt. Nirmala Sundararajan.

We are aware that many of the concerts have started late. The artists are not always punctual (clearly not all artists are so: there are many exceptions). In addition, they often have to get to Philadelphia from other cities on the day of the concert, and many reasons beyond our and their control can cause the delays. We have hence decided to set starting times for all concerts in fall at 4:30 pm; this we feel would perhaps provide the artists more time to get here. In any event, on behalf of the Board I wish to express my profound apologies for any inconvenience that the delays might have caused you.

We have no less than four events in September to be followed by three more. We start with the ever popular Sanjay Subramaniam on September 6th. We follow that immediately with Viji Rao's Bharatanatyam concert on September 10th. This concert is a part of the Ganesha Chaturthi festival held every year by Bharatiya Temple. We are very happy to be collaborating with an important Indian organization such as the Bharatiya Temple, and look forward to a heavy attendance. We intend to use that occasion to attract new audiences to Sruti and to augment our membership. This is a weekday concert, and we would like you to urge you to still make an effort to attend in large numbers as it is certain to be a scintillating concert by an accomplished artist (and teacher) from our own community.

In another outreach program and first-time collaboration with the Painted Bride we will be presenting a Karnatak concert by Guitar Prasanna in Philadelphia on September 28th. This will help increase visibility for Sruti in the Delaware Valley, as well as bring a unique program to our concert line-up. In addition, outreach into the mainstream community has always been our goal, and this will certainly help foster that effort as well as aid in securing grants from foundations all of whom strongly encourage outreach and education. Next, we have two "duo" concerts: Mysore Nagaraj & Dr. Manjunath (violin) on September 20th, and Ranjani & Gayatri on October 4th. These artists have always been popular and, being of the highest caliber, we expect a good turnout.

We are fortunate in that we do have significant external support this fall: Philadelphia Music Project is support-

ing the concerts by Sanjay Subramaniam, Manjunath & Nagaraj, and Ranjani & Gayatri. In addition, Viji Rao's dance event is supported by Bharatiya Temple, and Guitar Prasanna's guitar concert is supported by Painted Bride and Samuel Fels Foundation. We are extremely grateful to these organizations for the confidence they have placed in us; it is of course also a tribute to the quality of Sruti programming as well as to the tireless efforts of the numerous volunteers serving on the Board and the Committees.

We are currently seeking support for the other two events: Composers Day on November 1st, and Sruti Day on December 6th. We have a proposal being evaluated by Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; the outcome will not be known for quite some time. We would like to appeal to the Sruti patrons, members and well-wishers to generously support these events. Sponsorship is available for various aspects such as artist remuneration, food expenses and auditorium rental. Please contact me for details and for publicity opportunities.

We were able to produce some professional brochures using PMP support. The Fall concert brochure is just being produced and will reach you sometime next week. In addition, we intend to use these brochures with funding organizations, and for marketing.

As always, I look forward to your honest feedback as well as strong support of Sruti by attending the concerts in large numbers and by financially supporting the organization.

Sincerely,
C. Nataraj

Jayanthi Kumaresh – Veena Concert Review by Rajee Padmanabhan

Rajee Padmanabhan is a software engineer & a music enthusiast. She lives in Exton Pa with her husband, her son, and her iPod.

Veena concerts have become such a rarity these days that one tends to await them like a hornbill waiting for rains to come. This spring, Sruti audience's thirst for a Veena concert was quenched by an evening of eminently enjoyable music by Smt. Jayanthy Kumaresh.

Jayanthy started off with Muthiah Bhagavathar's sprightly *Daru Varnam* in *Khamach, Mate Malayadhwaja*. After a brief sketch of *Kamalamanohari*, the artist played Muthuswami Dikshitar's evergreen composition in this raga, *Kanchadelayathaakshi*. A nice round of *Kalpana Swarams* rounded out this piece.

Nannu Vidachi Kadalakura, Tyagaraja's gem in *Reethigowla* set to *Mishra Chappu*, was well rendered. Changing tempo, Jayanthy launched into the fast-paced *Gambhiravani kriti, Sadamadini. Ramachandram Bhavayami* in Vasantha followed. The kalpana swarams in this piece had a nice flow with interesting patterns.

Kalyani was taken up for elaboration. There were some delectable phrasings in the *alapana* bringing out the beauty of this majestic raga. *Bhaja re re Chitta*, a Dikshitar masterpiece was rendered with all the grandeur it deserves. Even though there was no *Niraval* in this item, the artist compensated with a full plate of *Kalpana swarams*, both slow and fast-paced. Sriram Brahmanandam on the Mridangam and Sriram Balasubramaniam on the Ghatam enlivened the swarams with their back and forth volleys with Jayanthy.

Soon after, the artist started Kapi alapana that one could perceive a strong influence of her Guru, the unparalleled Veena maestro, Sri. S. Balachander. The meditative quality, the vibrant *gamakams*, phrases traversing half an octave played on a single fret, plucks extended to the maximum – all bore the distinctive stamp of her Guru. Tanam was noteworthy for some of the fingering techniques used. Jayanthy brought out a nice effect by plucking on the first and third strings simultaneously along with the drone strings. The Pallavi in *Khanda jati Triputa*, with *Samam eduppu*, had the lyrics: *Arul Vamarul Tunai Purnidarul | Iyal Isai Enakku ||*

At the outset of the Pallavi, after demonstrating it vocally, the artist announced that there will be three stages in the piece, her improvisation (melodic) first, followed by improvisation on the percussion, followed by *Trikalam*. The Pallavi was executed very well. The *Ragamalika swarms* at the end included *Bhowli, Mohanam* and finally ending with *Kapi*. Both the *Srirams* played an enthusiastic *Tani Avartanam* at the conclusion of this piece. Sriram Balasubramaniam, the ghatam artist of the evening, has recently moved into Delaware Valley and the Sruti audience looks forward to hearing a lot more from him.

The *Yamunakalyani* melody, *Krishna nee Begane*, was followed by a Tamil song in *Desh*. *Lalgudi Jayaraman's tillana* in *Mishra Sivaranjani* was the concluding piece.

Jayanthy is a foremost *Vainika* in the Carnatic Music world today and her *vidwat* was amply evident in the flawless execution and virtuosity at display in the concert. In the cozy confines of *Calvary Vision Center*, both the artistes as well the audience enjoyed an ambience akin to a chamber concert.

M.S. Sheela—Vocal Concert Review By Revathi Subramony and P. Swaminathan

(Revathi Subramony is an All India Radio rated carnatic vocalist and lives in Exton, PA with her husband and 2 children. P. Swaminathan is a music enthusiast and is a frequent contributor to Sruti publications)

M.S. Sheela presented a vocal concert for Sruti on May 10, 2008 at the *Calvary Vision Center* in *Blue Bell*. She was accompanied by *Sandhya Srinath* on the violin and *Anoor Anantha Krishna Sharma* on the mridangam. Sheela started her concert with the *Kanada* *Adi tala varnam*, a change from the more commonly rendered *Kanada* *Ata tala varnam*. This was followed by the *Dikshitar krithi ekadhanam bhajeham* in raga *Bilahari* set to *mishra chapu tala*.

She presented a brisk round of swarams in *Ekadantham* with good mridangam support from Anoor Anantha Krishna Sharma. After a pleasing alapana in *Sriranjani* which included many fast paced sancharams, Sheela presented the well known Thyagaraja krithi *marubalka kunnavemira*. The swaraprasthara in *Marubalka* included many interesting patterns dwelling on the rishaba. Purandaradasa's *marayabeda manave neenu hariya smaraneya* in raga *Poorvikalyani* was rendered with a lot of bhakti bhavam. The niraval in "*hariya smarane mathradinda gora duritha vella nasha*" was very moving and Sandhya embellished the experience with her melodious violin.

Sheela is well known for rendering rare songs to her audience. Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar, a disciple of Saint Thyagaraja, has composed a large number of Devi krithis in new ragas. Most of these ragas had no known compositions before he actually composed in them and this is Muthiah Bhagavathar's greatest contribution to Carnatic music. In this concert, Sheela presented two such rare krithis of Muthiah Bhagavathar- *lalithambe shrimate mahite* in *Bhuvanagandhari* (a janyam of natabhairavi) and *eshvari rajeshvari shankari* in *Aberi*. Sheela has also popularized many compositions of the Maharaja of Mysore, Sri Jayachamaraja Wodeyar. She rendered *saraswathim bhagavatim* in the lovely raga *Hamsavinodhini*. She also presented the Papanasam Sivan composition *singara velavan vandan* in *Anandabhairavi* and Thyagaraja's *vandanamu raghu nandana* in *Sahana*. She had included many krithis on her list which made her concert rather long but she maintained a very good tempo throughout with no sagging.

Thyagaraja's *kaddanuvarki* in *Todi*, was rendered as the main piece. *Todi* alapana came with all its nuances, intricacies and long karvais demonstrating her manodharma. Her strong and yet flexible voice well aligned to the sruthi made the alapana very satisfying. The niraval in the familiar phrase in the charanam "Niddura nirakarinci mudduga tambura" was sung beautifully demonstrating her creativity and strong laya. The swaraprasthara included a good flow of sarvalagu swarams and the koraippu climaxed with good support from the violin and mridangam. The thani avarthanam by Anoor Ananthakrishna Krishna Sharma was excellent and the auditorium was filled with the nadam from his mridangam.

Sheela rendered a pallavi in the raga *amruthavarshini* in chathusra rupakam (tisra nadai). This is the first time I have heard an RTP in this raga performed for Sruti audience. After a superb rendering of alapana and tanam, Sheela gave an impressive improvisation on the pallavi followed by intricate swara kalpana. She embellished the swarakalpana with a series of ragamalika swarams in *bhupali*, *chandrakans* and *revathi*. It is impressive to see how Sheela employed *grahabedha* and *swarabedha* techniques (by consecutive shifting of one note) to present these pentatonic audava ragams.

amruthavarshini	S	_	_	_	G3	_	M2	P	_	_	_	N3	S.
bhupalam	S	R1	_	G2	_	_	_	P	D1	_	_	_	S.
revathi	S	R1	_	_	_	M1	_	P	_	_	N2	_	S.
chandrakans	S	_	_	G2	_	M1	_	_	D1	_	_	N3	S.

Overall, it was an excellent concert. My childhood memory of Sheela's music is her rendition of the Sringeri Saradadevi Suprabhatam, her voice pouring heavenly music! Sheela combines the classic padanthram of her guru Sri R.K. Srikantan with her own strong manodharma. Blessed with a powerful melodious voice, Sheela is able to perform with good diction and laya. Sandhya Srinath and Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma are both very talented and experienced artistes and provided excellent support to M.S.Sheela.

Great Composers Day - By Vidyasankar Sundaresan

On Nov. 1, 2008, Sruti will be hosting organizing a community participation event, billed as Great Composers Day. The idea behind this program is similar to that of the Tyagaraja Day, which we traditionally organize every year. For the Composers Day, we seek to highlight compositions from the large variety of composers in Indian classical music (Carnatic and Hindustani) through group and individual renditions. We are planning for a day-long event, beginning with group singing of the Navagraha Kritis of Muthuswami Dikshitar and a selection of Oottukkadu Venkata Kavi's Kritis. Participants can choose to present compositions from a range of genres, such as Varnams, Kritis, Padams, Javalis and Tillanas (Carnatic music), Khayals, Thumris and Taranas (Hindustani music). We welcome entries for both vocal and instrumental music from members of our community.

We recommend individual participants to plan for a composition that can be presented in five minutes. However, we are also open to exploring other formats of presentation, such as mini group renditions, including accompaniments. We would like to plan for this in advance, in consultation with participants and local teachers, and we would also like to maximize community participation for the day.

For further details, please contact Vijaya Viswanathan (PODirector@sruti.org) or Ramaa Nathan (RCDirector@sruti.org) or Vidyasankar Sundaresan (PresidentElect@sruti.org). Sign-up forms for individual participation in this event will soon be posted online at Sruti's website (www.sruti.org). We encourage music teachers and music lovers in the greater Philadelphia area (Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey) to take active part in our Composers Day program and make this event a tremendous success.



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To:

UPCOMING EVENTS—MARK your calendars

9/6/2008	Sanjay Subramaniam - Vocal
9/10/2008	Viji Rao - Dance
9/20/2008	Mysore Nagaraj and Dr. Manjunath—Violin
9/28/2008	Guitar Prasanna—Guitar
10/04/2008	Ranjani/Gayathri - Vocal
11/1/2008	KiranaVali Vidyasankar - Vocal
12/06/2008	V.K. Raman - Flute concert (tentative date)