



SRUTI NOTES

A Publication of SRUTI

SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society

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Volume 13, Issue 2, June 2010

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President's Note

Dear Indian Classical Music and Dance enthusiasts:

We are at the end of our Spring season ending with a chamber concert by Sri Ranjani (Neyveli Santhanagopalan's daughter) at Stuarts Keep on July 11th. Those of you who attended the concerts thus far have given us enthusiastic feedback on the quality of the artistes. Your survey responses bear testimonial to this. We would encourage those not attending regularly to do so, as we do not want you to miss out on this thrilling experience. Your attendance motivates the many Sruti board members and volunteers to work harder and also bring in much needed ticket revenue. Sounds like a WHY? or NPR drive for donations, doesn't it?

The downturn in the economy has dried up a lot of our regular sources and we are thinking of innovative ideas to bring in the money. Many grant agencies that give us money regularly have not been able to help us this time. The generous donations of many of our Sruti members have made it possible to continue with our scheduled programming this year. Corporate matching of funds donated is also helping us fill the coffers. We are collaborating with institutions like Montgomery Community College and the like to help us defray the costs. For the first time, we are also offering a SRUTI credit card through Capital One. This will be another way to support Sruti. Please refer to the advertisement later in this publication for more details.

The BOD has taken on many new initiatives this year and we are making excellent progress. We have started going GREEN and reduced the amount of printed material mailings and relying on e-mails, Facebook and the Sruti web site. We have taken out advertisements in local papers and radio to publicize our programs. Our fan club on Facebook is growing with reviews, comments and pictures being displayed.

Our marketing and publication committees are working on putting a new face to our web site to take it to new levels and get more interaction going with its visitors. Our Online ticketing through Tix.com is gaining popularity with more people opting to buy on-line. We see more new faces in our programs and many youngsters are jumping in.

Our drive to involve Sruti youth is moving at a great pace. Our youth members have started doing interviews of artistes and we have others volunteering their time to help with Sruti administration and behind the food counters. We encourage all youth to come forward and become part of this movement to grow and nurture it. You will see more youth participation as we go to the next half of the year.

We are starting a new initiative to improve on member services to focus on our dedicated and loyal members who have supported Sruti through all these years. Sruti has only grown tall standing on the shoulders of these giants. We are considered a premiere organization in the region by the granting agencies, agencies sponsoring artists and by the artistes who perform in front of us. This has happened only because of our consistent policy and robust by-laws that govern us. Speaking of by-laws, please refer to the announcement later in this publication for details on a general body meeting to consider the remaining ones that were tabled in the last meeting held in Dec 2009.

The board is seriously working on putting together a plan and format to celebrate our 25th anniversary this year with Uma Prabhakar leading the initiative. We have taken the counsel of Sruti past presidents to help us put together an appealing program that you will enjoy and remember. We ask all Sruti members to gear up and help with celebrating this anniversary. This will mean putting forth some of your time and money to make this successful.

I would be remiss in not thanking the hard working board and committee members who are generous with their time to really put up quality material and programming before you. So please don't

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miss the fall concerts starting with L. Subramaniam on the violin on September 18th, Shijith Nambiar & Parvati Menon Bharathanatyam recital on Oct 9th, Hindustani classical by Veena Sahasrabudhe, South Indian classical by the Malladi brothers on Nov 13th to finish up with Composer's day and general body meeting on Dec 11th. We are looking forward to seeing all of you in these concerts.

Have a wonderful summer.

Venkat Kilambi on behalf of the Sruti BOD

From the Publications Committee

Dear friends,

Included in this edition of Sruti Notes are reviews of three very successful presentations- Salem Shriram's vocal concert, the visually stunning presentation by the Nrityagram ensemble and the D.K.Pattamal Memorial Concert. We would love to hear from you the rasikas as well. Please do provide feedback by emailing us at srutiphila@gmail.com. We are pleased to note that the Facebook page remains active. Your thoughts and comments are much appreciated.

We are preparing to celebrate 25 years of Music and Dance presentations by Sruti in the year 2011. We welcome your ideas and views.

Sincerely,

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Salem R.Shriram – Thyagaraja Aradhana Concert

Review by Rajee Raman

As is the norm, Sruti showcases the growing and abundant talent in North America during the *Thyagaraja Aradhana* concert. Salem Shriram, a resident of Memphis, presented an outstanding concert at this year's *Aradhana*, proving that he is a seasoned artist.

Sruti implemented a welcome change by scheduling the concert in the middle of the day, right after the children's performances. It must be mentioned that it was such a treat to watch and hear the children, in their colorful attires, singing with alacrity.

Salem Shriram held the audience completely captive from the get-go. Even the couple of lines he sung for mic. testing, in his clear, ringing voice – *pallavi* of the *Begada krithi Lokavanachatura* - left an impression. Shriram began the concert with a brisk *Cheraravademira Ramaiyya* after a brief raga sketch of *Reethigowla*. A nice round of *Kalpanswarams* followed, tak-

ing full advantage of the *janta* patterns to which the raga lends itself nicely. It was evident early in the concert that the main artist shared a good rapport with the accompanying artists, Sandhya Srinath on the violin and Rajna Swaminathan on the Mridangam,

Muddumomu in *Suryakantam*, the 17th *Melakartha*, is one of the many such lilting, little jewel of a *krithi* that Saint Thyagaraja gifted us. Shriram rendered this song very well. A speedy *Neevadanegana* in *Saranga* set to *Khanda Chappu* gave way to a lovely *Mukhari alapana*. It was a relatively short one, leaving this rasika wanting for more. Shriram launched into the perennial Semmangudi Srinivasaiyer favorite, *Ksheenamai Tiruga* in *Adi Talam*. Shriram sang a fantastic *Niraval* at the *charanam* rounding it up with bhava-laden *swarams*. The one thought that crossed my mind during the *Mukhari* piece was that the *Kalapramanam* could have been just a shade slower; the meditative quality of *Mukhari* would have been further enhanced.

The slokam, *Vasudevasutham Devam*, preceded the rarely heard, beautiful *Kambhodhi krithi* set in *Rupaka Talam*, *Elara ShriKrishna*. Apparently there is some doubt on the authenticity of this composition, as mentioned in "[The Musical Works of Thyagaraja](#)" by Prabhakar Chitrapu. Shriram wove some nice patterns in the *kalpanaswarams* at *Nagashayana Nagaripuni* to which Sandhya Srinath came up with excellent replies on the violin. Next came the *Dhanyasi krithi*, *Sangeethagnanam Bhakthivina*, sung in a fast pace, where Thyagaraja implies that, in his mind, just the mere knowledge of music bereft of devotion is not the right path towards God Realization¹.

The main piece of the afternoon was the *Sriranjani krithi*, *Marupalkagunnavevira*. Shriram sang an elaborate alapana. Sandhya Srinath played an equally good reply. Shriram's *sruthi*-adherent voice is his asset, lending itself nicely to a balanced vocalization, with a good proportion of *gamakams* and *brigas*. That he has a solid *patantharam* as well as loads of imagination, was clear from the way he handled this *krithi* as well as the way the superb flow in the *Niraval*. In fact, this exhilarating *Niraval*, at *Darinerigi* in the *charanam*, with the enchanting patterns, turned out to be the highlight of the concert for this rasika. Shriram sang an attractive set of *kalpanaswarams*, in both slow and fast speeds as well as in *Tisram*. Rajna had all along been of great support, playing with a lot of anticipation and clarity. Her crisp *Tani Avarthanam* was a fitting way to end this piece-de-resistance of the concert.

The soft, soothing *Yadukulakambhodhi* piece, *Srirama Jayarama*, came after the main piece. *Ramachandra Nidaya* in the evergreen *Surutti* brought the curtains down on a concert that will linger in my memory for some time to come. One could not help but wishfully, and yes, greedily, think that had it been a three-hour concert, we could have heard an enthralling Ragam-Thanam-Pallavi. I, for one, am grateful to Sruti for presenting an incredibly creative artist like Salem Shriram who provided us with two full hours of immensely enjoyable music.

References:

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.

Thyagaraja Vaibhavam - [Sangeetha Jnaanamu](#)
*Rajee Raman is an avid rasika of Carnatic Music. She lives in
Exton, PA with her husband and son.*

Joyous Nrityagram

Review by Pallabi Chakravorty

The pre-eminent dance anthropologist Anya Peterson Royce describes virtuosity as a submission to a particular kind of order that culminates in a sense of awakening. This awakening of course is not only for the performers, but during performance, extends to the audience members who experience the aura of virtuosity. The Nrityagram dance ensemble, which performed at the Montgomery Community College in the greater Philadelphia region on March 27, 2010, exuded this sense of virtuosity. The dancers without question had completely submitted themselves (much like the bhakta or devotee) to the Odissi form.

The concert was a perfect blend of nritya and nritya that showed the dynamism of Odissi through imaginative choreography. The dancing was accompanied by zero stage craft and minimal lighting. This was a welcome change from the “over-production” common in staging of dances today. The starkness accented the sheer poetry of movements, music, and costumes and created moments of stunning perfection. The dancing took me back to an idealized village India as the wellspring of creativity. Despite my personal discomfort with this notion of eternal India, I looked on with mesmerized eyes (mugdha nayan).

The program notes gave the audience a brief description of Nrityagram or dance village, founded by the late Protima Gauri, where dancing, she says, is a way of life. It also noted that Nrityagram receives many artists from all over the world who give seminars and workshops on music, sculpture, painting, theater and dance. The notes mentioned Nrityagram’s rising visibility in the international circuit of dance. The choreographic composition



“Pratima: Reflection” was first commissioned by the Joyce Theater in New York. Sruti, the Indian Music and Dance Society in the Philadelphia region, in collaboration with Montgomery County Community College was presenting this work. So, one must not be misled by the

term “gram” or village. The political economy of Nrityagram is the opposite of an isolated village India; it is a narrative of globalization and networks.

All members of the ensemble—Surupa Sen, Bijayni Satpathy, Pavithra Reddy, Rasmi Raj and Manasi Tripathy—are highly accomplished dancers. Their measured and eloquent movements matched the symmetry of their proportioned bodies. Surupa Sen, the artistic director and choreographer, is to be commended for creating a sustained sense of beauty through solos, duets and en-

semble work, among which the choreography of “Chhaya” was most appealing to me. The snake-like coils of the tribhanga were visually arresting as bodies united and multiplied creating and highlighting cohesion and interdependence of images. The bols of the mridangam emphasized this collective unity of the dancers, where each individual dancer melded perpetually into the collective. A similar idea about interdependence and duality of being was rendered through the narrative piece “Vibhakta”, performed by Surupa Sen and Bijayini Satpathy. They portrayed the duality of Ardhanarishwara with energetic articulation of raudra rasa. This was different in energy and composition to the rendition of the solo Ardhanarishwara one associates with the late Sanjukta Panigrahi.

The piece “Mugdha” was choreographed to the lyrics of Geet Govind. It was perhaps the quintessential Odissi piece in my memory; surely as a result of the popularity of the song “Dhira Samire” choreographed by the late Kelucharan Mahapatra and performed by his many disciples. But in this rendition by the Nrityagram, the Odissi vocabulary seemed to expand into more spectacular leaps and movements from the more conventional undulating and statuesque postures. The slow and fast paced movements synchronized with playful eyes and expressive faces of the three dancers Pavithra Reddy, Manasi Tripathy, Rasmi Raj.

Odissi dance was identified and codified in the 1950’s as a classical Indian dance form from the state of Orissa. Although derived from temple sculptures and the Vaisnavite tradition, it embodies many trajectories and influences (Mahari, Gotipua, Akhada, Nacha). The powerful impact of the bhakti movement in medieval India and the dominance of



Krishna cults overshadow the tribal or yogini cults that also form part of the Odissi heritage.

These influences are mostly overlooked in the dominant history of the form. However, the emphasis on powerful leaps, dynamic movements, and stunning yoga postures in the repertoire of the Nrityagram reminded one about the other traces of history in this dance. The concluding piece “Aarati” created the chariot or rath of Jagannath with dancing lights. It was a celebration of dance as worship (aradhana). In Sanskrit “Aa” signifies towards or “to”, and “rati” is “right or virtue” and the piece became a fitting end to a virtuoso performance.

The richness of the dance that was presented did not do justice to the reductionist history of the dance form presented in the program notes. The complex history of classical Indian dance forms is an integral part of their vitality and resonance in post-colonial India. The “awakening” Anya Peterson Royce talks about is supposed to last past the moment of its experience. For such deep and sustained awakening of knowledge or in-

terest in Indian dance, more attention should be paid to the program notes. Art exhibitions are a good example of how such knowledge about specific art forms are produced in a nexus between the artist, the art-historian/curator and the viewer. Perhaps the dance world should follow in their steps?

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Photographs courtesy Nan Melville

D.K. Pattammal Memorial Concert By Vijay Siva

Review by Rasikan

D.K. Pattammal (DKP) was one of the finest musicians of the so-called golden era of Carnatic music (ca: 1930-1960). She is remembered as one of the trinity of female musicians (M.S. Subbulakshmi and M.L. Vasanthakumari being the other two) who revolutionized the place of women in the Carnatic music world. DKP passed away about a year ago.

SRUTI honored her memory on May 15th 2010 at the Calvary Vision Center, Blue Bell, PA. The day's program started with Kiranavali Vidyasankar's erudite talk on the musician and her music. It was an apt lead-in to a concert by Vijay Siva. More about her talk later.

It was quite appropriate that Vijay Siva should be the main artist of the day. Vijay is arguably the best exponent today of the DKP style of music. He learnt first from DKP's brother and disciple, D.K. Jayaraman (DKJ), and continued to study with her after the death of his guru.

He was accompanied by R.K. Shriramkumar and J. Vaidyanathan (JV), both protégés of DKP. Also JV is the son of DKJ.

Sri Ranganayakam (Nayaki, Dikshitar) and Enthara nithana (Harikambhodhi, Thyagaraja) were vintage DKP. While delineating Harikambhodhi, Vijay Siva was careful to avoid mixing proyogams of Khamas, a common mistake.

Lately, Vijay Siva has been setting up a path of his own. This was evident that day in his glorious Karaharapriya (Nadachi Nadachi, Thyagaraja). Some of the fairly fast paced brighas were a departure from the DKP style without, however, losing the azhutham that characterizes her music. The audience gave a prolonged, spontaneous applause after the alapana which was duly acknowledged by the musician with folded hands.

We, in SRUTI, have had many opportunities of hearing Shriramkumar. We all know that he is no slouch and he confirmed it with a delightful Karaharapriya alapana.

The thani by JV that followed was short and sweet.

Vijay had started the concert with a varnam in Hamasdwani (Pagavari, Patnam) followed by Pahi Sri Giriraja suthe (Ananda

bhairavi) a not so frequently heard kriti of Syama Sastry. After the Harikambhodhi and Nayaki, he rendered Ramabhirama (Dhanyasi, Thyagaraja) and a filler in Kambhodhi (Arumoru marundhu, Muthu Thandavar) before the Karaharapriya.

Many present day artists short shrift RTP with a minor ragam, quick thanam, simple pallavi and spend time on ragamalikai swarams. So, it was a pleasant and welcome surprise that Vijay launched into Poorvi Kalyani for his RTP. Alapana itself was rather short, but the thanam was rendered in classic style. He chose a rather complicated pallavi - Parama pavana Rama, paapa vimochana - in tisra tripata thalam, misra nadai (49 matras) with an atheetha eduppu! After neraval, he also did the difficult trikalam. I wonder how many in the audience were able to keep the thalam faithfully. And as if to add to the challenge, he doubled the speed for the swarakalpana!

The post pallavi segment included a javali (Kopamedula, Kedaragowla, Chinnayya), Ninyako (Ragamalikai, Purandara dasa). He rendered Enraikku Siva kripai (Mukhari, Neelakanta Sivan) starting on the anupallavi as is the tradition. A fast paced Karpagame (Madyamavathy, Sivan) was followed by a patriotic song of Bharathiyar (Thayin mani kodi pareer). Vijay concluded the concert with a Tirupukazh and the traditional Mangalam.

A day after the concert, one of my friends called me to talk about the concert. He said that he and his wife were sitting in the back rows - taking care of their children - and mentioned that seeing all the heads swaying back and forth enjoying the delightful music was like seeing branches of trees swaying in a pleasant breeze. This just about sums up the audience enjoyment. They gave a long, standing ovation at the end of the concert which Vijay, Shriramkumar and Vaidyanathan fully deserved.

Kiranavali's talk.

Before the concert, Kiranavali Vidyasankar, a musician of repute in our midst, gave an interesting one hour lecture/demo about DKP which included some recordings of DKP. She mentioned that she has had personal interactions with DKP.

Kiranavali began the session by playing "Eppadi padinaro" in Abheri which DKP had recorded in her teens. Kiranavali pointed out the bhavam in DKP's singing even at that young age and also the azhutham in the rendering.

Kiranavali went on to give a brief musical bio of DKP emphasizing that DKP had no formal guru but imbibed the best elements of the great musicians by a type of "osmosis". For instance, her well known grip on laya was the result of hearing many concerts of one of the best laya oriented vidwans of her days, Kancheepuram Naina Pillai. Kiranavali pointed out that DKP was well known for rendering Dikshitar kritis. DKP learned a few of them from Ambi Dikshitar, a descendent of Muthuswami Dikshitar and also from T.L. Venkatarama Iyer

In DKP's younger days, it was not customary for female musicians to indulge in long alapanas or swarakalpanas with laya emphasis. DKP bucked the trend; indeed she even rendered

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many complicated pallavis. As an example, Kiranavali played a pallavi in Dhanyasi in tisra rupakam, misra nadai. Kiranavali pointed out that the trikalam in this pallavi is very complicated, but hearing the way DKP sang, one would be hard pressed to detect it. Such was the ease with which DKP rendered it.

At the end, Kiranavali played DKP's signature song, as it were, "Shanti nilava vendum".

An ardent admirer and lover of Carnatic music, Rasikan has been a regular contributor to Sruti Notes and other publications of Sruti.

Vadivelu and Vazhuvurar Centenaries

An appeal by A Seshan, Mumbai

Bharatanatyam (BN) owes its present stature to the Thanjavur Quartet who systematized the existing *Sadir* and evolved the *Margam* (the *Alarippu* to *Tillana* format) paving the way for sound training and performance on the stage. They did to BN what later Ariyakudi did to Carnatic music. The brothers Chinayya (1802-1856), Ponniah (1804-1864), Sivanandam (1808-1863) and Vadivelu (1810-1845) contributed richly not only to BN but also to Carnatic music. They composed a large number of *varnams* and *kritis*, including the *Navaratnamala*, a tribute to their guru. They were the direct disciples of no less a person than Muthuswami Dikshitar, one of the Carnatic music trinity. Dikshitar called Vadivelu as an *ekasandhagrahi* - one who had the ability to reproduce a song after hearing it only once. He introduced and popularised violin in Carnatic music concerts along with Baluswami Dikshitar. He was also responsible, along with Swati Tirunal, for the popularisation of Mohiniattam providing opportunities to women dancers. Until then Kathakali, the male preserve, dominated the dance scene in Kerala. The bicentennial of his birth falls in this year. We have already missed the birth bicentennials of his three elder brothers. This is not surprising since *Margam* itself is being forgotten. ***The country should utilize the opportunity to observe this year in memory of all the members of the Quartet.***

What is disturbing in the Bharatanatyam scene today is the slow death of *Margam* evolved by the Quartet in a structured manner introducing *nritha* and *nritya*, including *abhinaya*, to make the transition from one to the other easy and smooth for the artiste and the viewer alike. It was the standard fare offered by dancers till about the third quarter of the last century after its great revival in the earlier quarter. Its heyday was reached during the twenty five years after Independence when great *gurus* like Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai, Kattumannarkoil Muthukumaran Pillai, Tiruvidaimarudur Kuppaiyah Pillai and Vazhuvur Ramaiah Pillai strode the field like giants and groomed many students who later became international stars. Think of the days when Vazhuvurar recited *jatis* in his leonine voice and Kittappa Pillai sang *jatiswarams* melodiously. The climax was reached when, under the *nattuvangam* of Vazhuvurar, Anandhi and Radha danced and M S Subbulakshmi joined the team to sing padams for *abhinayam*. The program listing (available at Programme brochure on <http://www.msstribute.org/pageflip/arangetram.html>) is a sample of those glorious days, the unbelievable contents of a BN performance by Anandhi and Radha at the Indian Gymkhana grounds on the then Brahmanwada Road, near King's Circle in

Matunga, Bombay (as it was then called). It was in aid of the Gymkhana Building Fund held on April 4, 1947. Vazhuvurar was the conductor and MS joined to sing padams for *abhinayam*.

All the seven songs between the two intervals are mentioned as *padams* in the programme brochure and were obviously sung by MS. (Note the absence of a *javali*.) The performance started at 8pm and one does not know when it ended. There were two intervals. What a sumptuous fare was offered to *rasikas*! Think also of the value one got for money in those days by paying what would look today as a small price for an admission ticket. It is unfortunate that in those days we did not have the facility of videographing the event. Not only the old timers but even the younger generation of dancers and *rasikas* will wonder whether those golden days will ever return.

There were contemporaneously new trends also like the dance productions of Kalakshetra which, however, preserved the basic grammar of the format in spirit. There were thematic dances like the *Kuravanjis* and fusion, the latter attempted by Uday Shankar. However, all these attempts were on a limited scale. *Margam* continued to be the bread and butter of most of the topnotchers in the field. But in recent years, it has gone into the background with fewer and fewer dancers giving attention to it and the leading lights of the profession taking to thematic dancing, fusion and modern dance. (See the article on "*Neo-Classical and Modern Dancing and Margam in Bharatanatyam*" in <http://www.narthaki.com/info/articles/art262.html>). Aficionados of the dance form are not sure whether *Margam* would survive after a decade if the five star dancers cut themselves away from their roots. One reason given by the latter is that the audiences have no patience or time to go through a three-hour recital on traditional lines. This is, however, belied by the splendid response to *Margam* based programmes this writer has observed at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Mumbai in recent times. Not only were the large halls (with 1000 seats) filled to the full, there were also cases of those without advance booking for the smaller auditoria (200-300 seats) being turned back. I feel the real reason for the decline may be that the average artiste does not have either the passion, or the patience, or the physical stamina to traverse the path of *Margam*. She (includes he also!) can no longer dance a *varnam* for an hour with dripping sweat and panting breath even in air-conditioned halls. This is because of the poor conditioning of the body. Reputed *gurus* and institutions teaching BN, Kathakali, etc., have always emphasised physical fitness as a prerequisite for a professional dancer and have incorporated exercises like *yogasanas* in their curricula.

I remember reading somewhere that Vazhuvur Ramaiah Pillai, *nattuvanar* nonpareil, was born in 1910. But I tried for several months without success accessing websites, dancers and others to get the authentic information on his date of birth. Eventually it was found to be December 24, 1910. Thus this year marks the birth centenary of Vazhuvurar also. Arguably, according to some experts, it was he who gave the *nattuvanar* and the other accompanists a place of importance

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on the stage by seating them on the side of the stage. Till then they used to move behind the dancer in *Sadir*. He also introduced the practice of the dancer entering the stage from the side in a dramatic way, as exemplified best by Kamala, instead of walking casually to the centre to start the programme. These are, of course, minor details. He blazed a new trail making BN more popular through his own *bani* and the media of movies. His style may need another article to discuss. The sculptural poses in *Tillana* were conceived by him and they are now standard fare in all schools of BN. It is a happy coincidence that the Vadivelu bicentennial and the Vazhuvurar centenary fall in the same year, making it a double delight to celebrate

Sangeet Natak Akademi (Central and regional) and cultural institutions here and abroad should observe both the landmark occasions together. In particular, the Chennai *sabhas* should keep this in mind for this year's December music and dance festival. *They should arrange for concerts of all the banis of BN, based on Margam*. Besides providing a stimulus to its revival without any detriment to the other experiments currently going on, it would also restore the *Nattuvanar* to his rightful place of importance on the stage. (See "*The Rise and Fall of the Nattuvanar*" in <http://www.narthaki.com/info/articles/art234.html>). This year may be declared the year of *Margam* in the world of BN. In Tamil Nadu, which can take credit for the birth of BN, if the Chief Minister agrees to head the Celebration Committee despite his busy life, it would give a great boost to the occasion and emphasise its importance. The event may be called "*Bharatanattiya Marabunerit Tiruvizha*" in Tamil Nadu and "*Margam Mahotsav*" elsewhere. (*Marabu* = tradition or convention, *Neri* = path and *Tiruvizha* = great festival. The 't' after *Marabunerit* provides the *sandhi* link required by grammar.) In Tamil Nadu, it should be celebrated with at least one programme based on *Margam* in every district headquarters with live orchestra (not recorded music) when local artistes besides the established ones may be given chances to perform. Opportunities may be given to the different schools of Bharatanatyam besides Vazhuvur. Ideally, the items in the programmes should be compositions of the Quartet and Vazhuvurar. It will be a unique and valuable opportunity to rediscover some of the forgotten gems of the BN repertoire. I remember how a few of Syama Sastri's rarely-heard *kritis* were found during the bicentennial celebration of his birth in 1962. D K Pattammal gave a concert on May 5, 1962 in Tiruvarur that was relayed in the National Programme of Akashvani. She sang such songs as "*Dayanidhe*" (a Begada varnam), "*Devi Brova*" (the only song in Chintamani) and "*Tarunam Edamma*" (in Gaulipantu, arguably the only Tamil song of the *vaggeyakara*). Subsequently they became popular on the concert circuit. The celebration of *vaggeyakaras'* days thus serves a useful purpose. Seminars may be organised to discuss the role of *Margam*, trends in BN, training (including physical exercises), dance therapy, choreography, etc., and future directions to draw a roadmap

The author, an Economic Consultant in Mumbai, is a music and dance buff.

This article was first published in www.narthaki.com in March 2010 and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author.

Ammachattiram Kannuswami Pillai – A multi-faceted musician (1876-1927)

Profile by Vidya Jayaraman

Many are the stars who have studded the firmament of Nagasvaram & Taval. While a few Nagasvaram vidvans such as Rajaratnam Pillai are known, Taval vidvans are almost always unknown. Even the few like Pakkiriya Pillai or Needamangalam Meenakshisundaram Pillai exist only as names in the minds of a few listeners of generations past. One such Taval vidwan, a brilliant laya wizard and a musician who had many facets was Ammachattiram Kannuswami Pillai. Interestingly, a great many of his students and those who learnt music from him went on to achieve star status but not much is known in public memory about the guru!

Born in Tanjavur in the year 1876, Ammachattiram Kannuswami Pillai blossomed as a Taval musician when he was barely twelve years old. At a wedding he attended, he was asked by those who were assembled there to accompany the then 16-year old Tirumarugal Natesa Pillai. After this extempore debut concert at the age of 14, he continued to be the stock accompanist for the famous Nagasvaram artiste Tirumarugal Natesa Pillai. According to the account of Dr.B.M.Sundaram, this continued until one day, when Natesa Pillai was said to have remarked that it was not possible for a Taval vidwan to know the intricacies of Nagasvaram. The offended Kannuswami Pillai then took up the challenge and learnt Nagasvaram and soon became adept at handling the instrument. He later settled his differences and continued to accompany Tirumarugal Natesa Pillai.

Kannuswami Pillai has also had the honor of accompanying the gifted flautist Sarabha Sastri where he was accompanied on the violin by Tirukkodikaval Krishna Iyer and the mrdangist was unable to make it to the concert. This was perhaps a unique instance of a Taval vidwan accompanying a flute concert. He also learnt to play dholak from the dholak player Nannumiyan and also learnt the art of the Jalatarangam too and performed several concerts on the Jalatarangam.

His list of students reads like a veritable who's who in the world of Carnatic Music:

Tiruvavaduturai Rajaratnam Pillai – the Nagasvaram Player and Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer – a musician of the past known for his scholarship in laya. Even the scholar musician Mudikondan Venkatrama Iyer was his student. He accompanied his student Rajaratnam Pillai on his debut concert – a unique case of a guru accompanying a shishya.

Kannuswami Pillai was not just a musician he was a composer well-versed in Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit. He has several compositions and Tillanas to his credit including the Vasanta Tillana which is popular in the concert circuit. He passed away in the year 1927 in Tiruvazhundur. His son A.K.Venugopala Pillai is a famous Taval vidvan too.

Vidya Jayaraman, is an IT consultant, lives in West Chester, PA and maintains the website <http://www.guruguha.org>. Her other interests include Classical Tamil literature, Music-History & Musicology.

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Call for Participation

Sruti Day- Saturday December 11, 2010

Sruti, The India Music and Dance Society would like to select up to four groups in the Classical Music category and up to three groups in the Classical Dance Category to participate in the Sruti Day program to be held on December 11, 2010. In the music category, each group will be given 30 minutes and in the dance category, each group will be given 20 minutes.

Groups interested in participating in the classical music category should forward a sample audio recording by the group - preferably in MP3 format

- 1) The audio should be a minimum of 10 minutes in length.
- 2) Teachers may be part of the group.

Groups interested in participating in the classical dance category should forward a sample DVD recording by the group

- 1) The DVD recording should be a minimum of 10 minutes in length.
- 2) Teachers may be part of the group.

All recordings should be received by **August 15 2010**. The groups will be selected by the Board of Directors of Sruti. Please include names of participants. The selected groups will be notified by **September 15 2010**.

Please mail the recordings to: **Sundari Balakrishnan, 13 Foothill Path, Chadds Ford, PA 19317**

Contact srutiphila@gmail.com or balusundari@yahoo.com for information

Sruti 25!!

We at Sruti- The India Music and Dance are getting geared up for celebrating 25 years of Indian Classical Music and Dance in the year 2011. We welcome suggestions from our members and well wishers with respect to the following

- a. A graphic that communicates the idea of Sruti 25 that could be used for visibility and promoting the celebration of music and dance.
- b. Ideas that you may have for programming. Even though we may not be able to accommodate all ideas we would like to get your suggestions and try to accommodate as many thoughts as possible.
- c. If you are interested in volunteering for Sruti 25 activities please email srutiphila@gmail.com and let us know your area of interest.

Please forward your thoughts and ideas to srutiphila@gmail.com

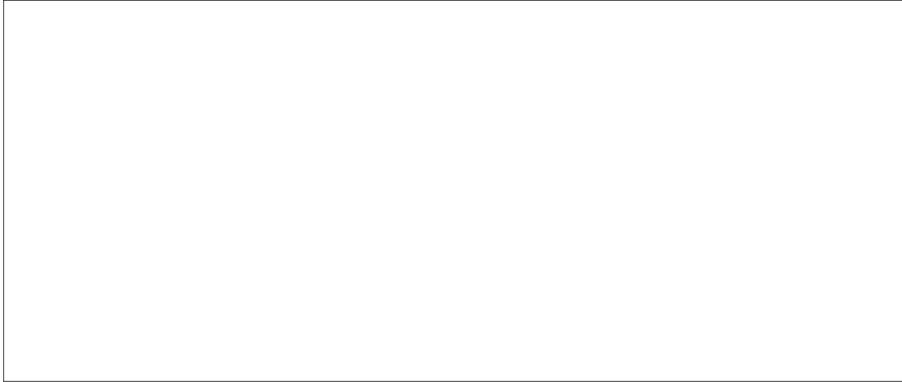
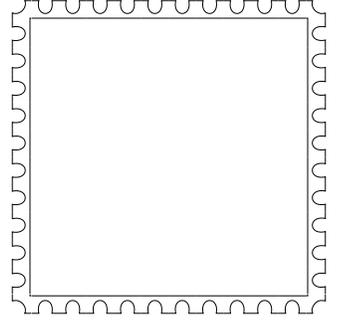
General Body Meeting- July 18 2010

Sruti Board of Directors invites its members to attend a General Body Meeting on July 18th from 2pm - 5pm at Stuart's Keep Club House, 30 Haines Road, Norristown/EastNorriton, PA to discuss and if agreed upon incorporate new proposed language and additional by-laws to the Sruti constitution. This is a continuation of the General Body Meeting held on Dec 12th, 2009 which was left unfinished due to lack of time. This meeting is for members only as of June 30th, 2010 as validated by the Secretary of Sruti. Members can log into the Sruti website with user = sruti and pwd = Music to access the by-law documents. As per the constitution we need a quorum of 25 members to conduct this meeting and request you to RSVP the Secretary at ravi_pillutla@yahoo.com by July 15th so that we can ascertain the quorum and go ahead with holding the meeting.



SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society
3055 Highley Road,
Audubon
PA 19403



Upcoming Sruti Events.....

Sunday July 11 2010 at 2.00 P.M.

Chamber Concert- South Indian Classical Vocal : **Sri Ranjani Santhanagopalan**
accompanied by **K.S.Mani** : violin and **Suresh Ramachandran** : mridangam
Stuart's Keep Club House, 30 Haines Road, Norristown/EastNorriton, PA
Suggested Donation \$10.00 (Core Member and Season passes are not valid for this concert)

Fall 2010 Concert Series.....

Saturday September 18 2010-South Indian Classical Instrumental Concert- Violin Duo:
L. Subramaniam & Ambi Subramaniam

Saturday October 9 2010-Bharatanatyam Style Indian Classical Dance:
Shijith Nambiar & Parvati Menon

Saturday October 23 2010-North Indian Classical Vocal Concert: **Veena Sahasrabudhe**

Saturday November 13 2010- South Indian Classical Vocal Concert: **Malladi Brothers**

Saturday December 11 2010- **Composer's Day & General Body Meeting**

www.sruti.org