



SRUTI NOTES

SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society

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From The Editors

We are back again with our second year of Sruti Notes! Since SRUTI has been in hibernation for the past three winter months, this issue of Sruti Notes will be brief. However, during these months the Board of Directors has been very busy planning an exciting and eventful year of SRUTI programs.

In this issue of Sruti Notes, we highlight SRUTI programs for the first half of the year. We have also included comments that we received from our readers in response to Sruti Ranjani 1998, in addition to our other usual features such as, upcoming events from other sister organizations in the Tristate area, community news and other news items that we think may be of interest to our readers.

We look forward to hearing from our readers. Please send us your articles and news items that we can share with our membership.

Upcoming Sruti Events

!!Mark Your Calendars!!

March 13-14, 1999: Appreciation of Carnatic Music
A workshop conducted by Chitravina
N. Ravi Kiran

March 27, 1999: Thyagaraja Aradhana



Ravi Shankar awarded the Bharat Ratna



Feedback From Our Readers

Our readers sent us the following comments in response to SrutiRanjani 1998.

I just received a copy of SrutiRanjani and would like to congratulate you on an excellently produced magazine. I just had to sit down and read it cover to cover. I would now like to respond to Rasikan's article on the role of kriti (sahithya in particular) in Carnatic Music. I have known the author behind the pseudonym and I can imagine where he is coming from in raising the points in that article. However, I think he has missed the mark on many of his statements and claims. This letter is an attempt to provide another viewpoint.

1) Rasikan's claim: kriti in Carnatic music is meant to be an extension of raga delineation - hence serves a secondary purpose.

Response: Music can be appreciated at various levels - each determined by the intellectual keenness of the listener and the prevailing 'mood' or atmosphere created by the musician in relation to the listener. It is inherently a subjective response - hence putting an objective criterion for enjoyment is futile at best. The great vageyakaras of our classical music system knew fully well the power of language in communicating musical ideas to the common man. Take the example of Purandara Dasa. His musical output is reputed to be immense and his contributions towards musical grammar are legendary, yet he chose to communicate his ideas in simple language. It is the mark of a great composer when persons of varying knowledge and interest in the art form can each find something fascinating to appreciate in the composer's creation. I would argue that Thyagaraja's genius (and for that matter other composers who used language effectively) is as much in using words as in the musical phraseology.

Words in a kriti can be thought of as rungs of a ladder that takes us towards the ultimate musical goal. As an example, who can afford to be unmoved by the simple words and lilting melody of Bhadrachala Ramadas piece - *Ennaganu Rama Bhajana*, sung soulfully by MS? In many Bhakti schools of thought, tuneful music is used as a medium to worship God - whatever one's perception of that God maybe. Is Rasikan suggesting that an artist has to believe in the particular God being praised in order to do justice to the kriti? Life is not so abstract, and in fact, Surya, Chandra and other 'grahas' are indeed worshipped by many for the powers they hold. Who are we to dictate to others how they should derive pleasure?

2) Rasikan's claim: Sanskrit is a language very few of us understand and words in Dikshitar's and other composers' kritis are irrelevant to the enjoyments of music.

Response: Perhaps Rasikan feels hampered by the lack of knowledge of a particular language, but I and many other music enthusiasts I know derive immense pleasure from the pada lalithya of geniuses like Dikshitar, Purandara Dasa, Annamacharya, Othukadu Venkatasubbayyar et al. To call it irrelevant is plain wrong. As a counter example, viruttams in Tamil are typically sung in oft-used melodic ragas that include enjoyable alapanas, yet the words themselves are sung typically in one or two notes alone. Where is the musicality in this output? According to Rasikan, then these and other such Tamil pieces belong in a poetry recitation seminar.

3) Rasikan's claim: Include more than one charanam only if it makes sense musically.

Response: Well, what about repetition in an alapana? Is that allowed? There are always slight variations in the rendition of successive charanams, and remember that the listener's wandering mind can often settle on an idea the second or third time around! As an aside, I wonder why the great composer Thyagaraja chose not to compose varnams and other basic musical structures, but instead chose to express his ideas in multiple-charanam kritis.

In conclusion, I submit that Sahitya is very much integral to Carnatic music and that language adds another dimension to its enjoyment. A beautiful rose has plenty of virtues to arrest an observer's eye. But wouldn't it enhance the appreciation if it were fragrant as well?

Sridhar Gopalakrishna, Sunnyvale, CA.

I read with interest the article on Sthala kritis by Uma Prabhakar in the Sruti Ranjani. Among the famous Trinity of Carnatic music composers, Muthuswami Dikshitar was the most well traveled. He has composed on the deities of various kshetras that he visited extolling their sthala mahimas based on puranas and other sources. While many of them stand alone, there are some kritis which are grouped under various categories. Uma has listed a few of them. I would like to add one more set.

Dikshitar has composed nine kritis on Neelothpalambike of Nagapattinam known together as Neelothpalimbike navavarna kritis. An interesting (musical) feature of this set is that they are set to Gowla and eight other ragams whose names end with Gowla. Here is the full list:

- (1) Neelothpalambikaye - Mayamalavgowla - Chapu
- (2) Neelothpalambikaye - Gowla - Rupakam
- (3) Neelothpalambike - Chayagowla - Rupakam
- (4) Neelothpalambam - NariReetigowla - Chapu
- (5) Sri Neelothpala nayike - Reetigowla - Rupakam
- (6) Neelothpalambikaye - Kannadagowla - Adi
- (7) Neelothpalamba - Narayanagowla - Chapu
- (8) Neelothpalambikayai - Kedaragowla - Adi
- (9) Neelothpalambike - Poorvagowla - Rupakam

Rasikan

Upcoming Events

Sruti: Please mark the following dates in your calendars (1999) and plan on attending these events.

MARCH 13 -14: Workshop on 'Appreciation of Carnatic Music' : Directed by Chitravina N. Ravi Kiran. Venue: Palace of Asia, Fort Washington, PA.

MARCH 27: Thyagaraja Aradhana : Main artist – Madurai R. Sundar (vocal) accompanied by Sandhya Srinath on violin and Suresh Ramachandran on mridangam. Venue: Pennfield Middle School, Hatfield, PA.

APRIL 17: 'Abhyasa' – Dance program produced by Cleveland Cultural Alliance and choreographed by Adyar Lakshman. Venue: Upper Dublin High School, Fort Washington, PA.

MAY 16: Vocal concert by Neyveli Santhanagopalan accompanied by Delhi P. Sunderrajan on violin and S.S Raja Rao on mridangam.

JUNE 5: Violin concert by Mysore Nagaraj and Manjunath.

Telugu Association of Greater Delaware Valley will be conducting their Seventh North American Cultural Competitions in playlets, folk dances and singing on May 8, 1999. For more information please contact: Janardana Rao Allada at 215-362-9182.

Triveni, the Kannada Association, will be celebrating Ugadi on Saturday, April 24, 1999 at the Kresson School in Voorhees, NJ. The highlight of this program will be a Kannada play. For more details, please contact Bharathi Sena

SRUTI Concert Tapes

The following most recently recorded music tapes are available for distribution among the patrons of Sruti. To receive any of these tapes and for a complete tape listing, please contact Viji Swaminathan at (215)-643-2145. Prices for Sruti members (unless noted otherwise) are: \$10 for a two-cassette set and \$15 for a three-cassette set. Non-members should add \$2 to the cost of each set. Please add \$2.00 per concert for shipping & handling.

1. O.S. Thyagarajan (Vocal), 1997 (3) Srikanth Venkataraman (Violin), Srimushnam Raja Rao (Mridangam)
2. Balaji Shankar, 1997 (2) Ganesh Prasad (Violin), Poongulam Subramaniam (Mridangam)
3. T.N. Krishnan & Viji Krishnan Natarajan (Violin), 1997 (2) B. Harikumar (Mridangam), Vaikkom R. Gopalakrishnan (Ghatam)
4. Kadri Gopalanath (Saxophone), 1997 (2) Kanyakumari (Violin), Guruvayur Durai (Mridangam)
5. N. Ramani (Flute), 1998 (2) Srikant Venkataraman (Violin) Srimushnam Rajarao (Mridangam).
6. Lalgudi G.J.R. Krishnan (Violin) 1998 (2) Vellore Rambhadran (Mridangam), V. Nagarajan (Kanjira)
7. Sanjay Subramanian (Vocal) 1998 (2) A. Ananth Krishnan (Violin) Padmashree Palghat Raghu (Mridangam)
8. T.M. Krishna (Vocal) 1998 (2) Bombay B. Gayatri (Violin), K. Arun Prakash (Mridangam)
9. Ravi Kiran (Chitra Veena) 1998 (2), Sandhya Srinath (Violin), Balachandran (Mridangam).

Community News

Vidya Venkatraman got a perfect 1600!!! in her SAT tests. Her father, Dr. Venkatraman, is a founder member of SRUTI and a past secretary and Vice President.

T.S. Govindan's mother passed away last December. Govindans are life members of SRUTI.



Please send your feedback/contributions to Uma Prabhakar, at 135 Brochant Drive, BlueBell, PA 19422 or e-mail to UmaSPrabhakar@hotmail.com

In Other News

Ravi Shankar the well known sitar player received the **Bharata Ratna** award. He is the second musician to receive this honor, the first being Smt MS. Subbulakshmi. Ravi Shankar, you may recall performed for SRUTI in their Tenth Anniversary Gala.

D.K. Pattamal was awarded **Padma Vibhushan**, the second highest award. She is also the recipient of another prestigious award: **Kalinga award**.

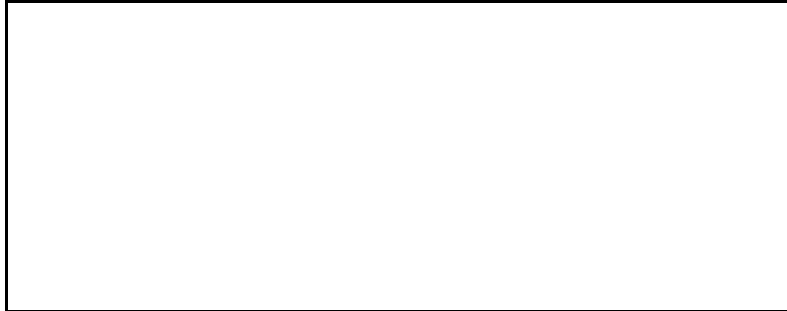
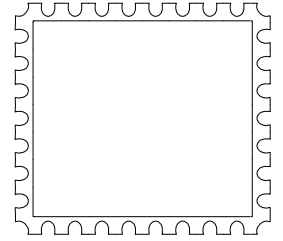
Sheik Chinna Moulana Sahib, the nadaswaram maestro, is the proud recipient of the **Sangita Kalanidhi award** from the Music Academy, Chennai.

Kadri Gopalnath, the saxophone maestro, received the **Rajyotsav award**, the highest honor awarded by the government of Karnataka.



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