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SANGEETHA SARATHY

Golden Jubilee of Singing Strings



SHARADHA VENKAT



Music is forever, it should grow and mature along with you. This Golden Jubilee year of playing Veenai by Iyer Brothers – Ramnath Iyer and Gopinath Iyer, proves that they grew with music. Kudos to brothers and goodluck for the forthcoming years.

While the Veena is commonly associated with Saraswathi, it is said that Shiva has invented this instrument. Brothers proved today how men can also be melodious on this instrument!

From the opening 'Sarasuda' varnam in Saveri to the concluding Tillana, their guru Pitchumani Iyer's repertoire reflected in every piece. Rasikas experienced the pure joy of natural naadam in the divine hall, with minimal microphone support enhancing the experience.

One has to pay tribute to Saraswathi (Vaani) while playing the Saraswathi Veenai. Hence following the varnam came 'Vageeswari Vaani Saraswathi' in the ragam Saraswathi by Muthiah Bhagavathar. A brief raga Alapanai, kruti with Chittaswaram and kalpana swarams were all enjoyable.

A glimpse of Neelambari was good enough for 'Amba Neelambari' of Tanjore Ponniah Pillai. When rasikas were soaked into Neelambari with the straight forward kruti, the Chittaswaram and durita kala Sahithyam brought everyone back.

Thyagaraja's 'Gyana mosaga radha' in Purvikalyani was the sub-main kruti for the day. The akshipita (an abstract

introduction) and the ragavardhini (main elaboration) were praise worthy. One could hear a Purvikalyani of 'pracheena' style. Neat niraval in 'Paramathmudu Jeevathmudu' followed by extensive kalpana swarams exhibited their expertise.

The main King of the evening was 'Chakkani Raja margamu' in Khaharapriya by Thyagaraja. Both the brothers created a kingdom through their well-crafted ragam, tanam and 'kantiki sundara' Rama adorned the throne.

Music is powerful by itself. So gentle plucking and strumming of the strings (meettu) and splitting technique of the fingers with jantai prayogams brought out the essence of kharaharapriya proving music speaks when words fail.

T R Sundaresan on the mridangam and Sivaramakrishnan on the ghatam were boon to this Veenai concert as accompanying this melodious instrument is an art by itself. They both have mastered this Art. They were subtle while rendering songs, bright during swarams and assertive during Tani avarthanam.

This serene evening came to a closure with a tillana in the ragam Vasantha kaisiki. The ragam and the tillana both were by their guru vidwan Pitchumani Iyer.

Music has a poetry of its own, and the poetry is melody. This melody was brought out entirely by Iyer Brothers throughout the concert. What a way to celebrate 50 years of the Brothers' musical journey!

U. Ve. Dushyanth Sridhar presented an engaging upanyasam titled "ஸ்ரீராமரின் காலம்," tracing the times of Sri Rama, during a captivating morning performance. His profound insights and eloquent narration brought the ancient tales to life, giving the audience a peek into the timeless stories of Sri Rama. The upanyasam not only highlighted the historical and cultural significance of Sri Rama's era but also left the audience with a deep sense of reverence and admiration. It was a morning filled with spiritual enrichment and intellectual stimulation, leaving everyone inspired by the wisdom of the past.



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ஸாஹித்யம் தரும் ஏற்றம்



முனைவர் சந்திரிகா ராஜாராம்

இந்த வருடம் அனைத்து விவிவுரைகளுக்கும் அற்புதமான தலைப்புக்களைத் தேர்ந்துதெடுத்திருக்கும் திரு சசிகிரண், காரியதரிசி திரு கிருஷ்ணமூர்த்தி மற்றும் பார்த்தசாரதி ஸ்வாமி சபா குழுவினருக்கு மனமர்ந்த பாராட்டுக்கள்.

சங்கீத மும்மூர்த்திகள் காலத்தில் ஸாஹித்யம் என்பது உன்னதத்தை அடைந்தது. மும்மூர்த்திகளின் வாக்கும் (வார்த்தைகள்), கேயமும்(இசை) ஒன்றுடன் ஒன்று கை கோர்த்து களிநடனம் புரிந்தன. வார்த்தைகள் முக்கியத்துவம் பெறத்தொடங்கின. இசையின் உன்னதத்தை மேம்படுத்தியது. இசைக்கு மேலும் பொலிவும் புதுப் பரிமாணங்களும் கொடுக்க வார்த்தைகள் அவசியம் என்பதை மும்மூர்த்திகள் சந்தேகத்திற்கு இடமின்றி நிறுவினர்.

இத்தகைய சாஹித்யத்தின் பெருமையை, அழகை, உயர்வை, அவசியத்தை தங்களின் அனுபவங்கள் மூலம் விளக்கினர் முனைவர்கள் நிர்மலா ராஜசேகர், சுபாஷினி பார்த்தசாரதி மற்றும் காயத்ரி கிரிஷ்.

பாடும்போது இசைக்கலைஞர்கள் மனதில் கொள்ளவேண்டிய நெறி முறைகளை மிக நேர்த்தியாக, ஆங்காங்கே இசைத்துக் காட்டி விளக்கினார் காயத்ரி கிரிஷ். “பதச்சேதம் செய்தால் பாடலின் பொருள் மாறிவிடும்; பாவத்திற்கேற்ப வல்லினம் மெல்லினம் பயன்படுத்திப் பாடுவது அவசியம். பாடலின் மொழியை அறிந்து பொருளை உள்வாங்கிக் கொண்டு இசைத்தால் இயற்றியவரின் பாவம் வெளிப்படும்,” என பல சிந்திக்கத்தக்க

கருத்துக்களை முன் வைத்தார் காயத்ரி.

பதச்சேதம் பற்றிக் கூறும்போது ‘சதா சலேஸ்வரம்’ என்று பாடுவது எதிர்மறை பொருளைத் தரும். ‘ஸதா அசலேஸ்வரம்’ என்பதே சரி; அதுபோல ‘ஸ்ரீ’ மஹா கணபதி அவதூமாம்’ என்று பிரிக்கவேண்டும் என்று மேலும் பல உதாரணங்களுடன் தெளிவு படுத்தினார். ‘மரிவேறே கதி எவ்வரம்மா’ என்னும் கிருதியில் ஸ்வரம் போடும்போது ‘மரிவே’ என்று நிறுத்துவது வாக்கேயக்காரருக்கு செய்யும் அநீதி இல்லையா? என்றும் விளக்கினார்.

வீணைக் கலைஞர் டாக்டர் நிர்மலா ராஜசேகர் பேசும்போது, வாத்தியத்தில் வார்த்தைகள் கேட்கும் வகையில் இசைப்பதன் அழகைத் தெளிவாக வாசித்துக் காட்டி ரசிகர்களை பரவசப்படுத்தினார். வாய்ப்பாட்டுக் கலைஞரின் கச்சேரியில், வயலின், மிருதங்கம் இவற்றின் பங்கு பற்றி சுவை பட விளக்கினார்.

டாக்டர் சுபாஷினி தன் உரையில், பாடல்கள் மூச்சை நிறுத்திப் பயிற்சி செய்யும் அவசியத்தை எடுத்துரைத்தார். குறிப்பாகப் பதங்கள் பாடும்போது, அவை நீண்ட ஆவர்த்தனம் கொண்டு இருப்பதாலும், சொற்கள் குறைவாக இருப்பதாலும், இந்தப் பயிற்சி அர்த்தம் மாறாமல் பாடுவதற்குக் கை கொடுக்கும் என்று கூறியது பாராட்டத்தக்கது. இளம் கலைஞர்கள் கவனத்தில் கொள்ள வேண்டிய அறிவுரை.

கிருதிகளில் சொற்கள் முக்கியத்துவம் பெறத் தொடங்கியதால், கற்பனையும் வளர்ந்தது, கொண்டு கூட்டிப் பாடுதல், யதி ப்ராஸம்,



எதுகை, மோனை போன்ற சுவையான முறைகள் இடம் பெற்று, பாடலின் கவித்துவம் மட்டுமின்றி அதன் இசைப்போக்கையும் மேன்மைப் படுத்தியது. தியாகராஜ யோக வைபவம், ஆகராஜ யோக வைபவம், ராஜ யோக வைபவம், யோக வைபவம், வைபவம், பவம், வம் என்று சொற்கள் குறைந்து கொண்டே வரும் கோபுச்ச யதியில் அமைந்த தீசஷிதரின் க்ருதியை பாடிக்காட்டி விளக்கினார் சுபாஷினி. இன்னும் பல உதாரணங்களுடன் வார்த்தைகளால் பாடல்கள் மேலும் மெருகேறும் அழகை நிர்மலாவும், காயத்ரியும் விளக்கினர்.

இதிலே ஸ்வராசவுரமாக அமைவதால் சுவை கூடுவதும் கவனிக்கத்தக்கது. இந்த வரிசையில், ‘காண வேண்டாமோ, விண்ணுயர் கோபுரம், இரு கண்ணிருக்கும்போதே’ என்ற பாடலும், ‘ஆனந்த நடமாடுவார், சதானந்த நடமாடுவார்’ பாடல்களும் வழங்கப்பட்டன. கல்பனா ஸ்வரம், நிரவல், பல்லவி ஆகியவை பாடும்போதும் பொருத்தமான வார்த்தைகளைத் தேர்ந்தெடுப்பது மிகவும் அவசியம் என்று மூவரும் டிஎம்டி, டிஆர்எஸ் போன்ற ஜாம்பவான்களின் கருத்துக்களைப் பகிர்ந்து கொண்டு நிகழ்ச்சிக்கு சுவை கூட்டினர்.

A Stylish Blend of Tradition and Innovation

 **R BHARATHWAJ**

The success of a concert is in keeping the audience engaged. The success of the musicians is in presenting their vidwat, true to their style and strengths. This evening outing featuring Aishwarya Vidhya Raghunath, Nishanth Chandran and R Sankaranarayanan, accomplished exactly both of these with utmost ease.

A racy start with ‘Sangeetha shastra nyanamu’ in mukhari, this concert meant business already. Aishwarya and Nishanth exchanged sparkling rounds of svarams. The nattaikuranji alapanai that followed was in stark contrast with a lot of leisure. Gopalakrishna Bharathi’s ‘Vazhi maraithirukkudhe’ was rendered in a much emotive fashion. Singing neraval at ‘utru parkave satre aagilum vilagadho undhan maadu’ seemed most natural and apt to the theme of the composition.

After a gripping rendition of Shyama Sastri’s Paras raga kriti ‘Triloka maatha’,



Aishwarya presented an elaborate alapanai of Keeravani, showcasing the many flavours of the ragam and Nishanth gave a detailed and suitable expansion in his turn. Thyagaraja’s ‘Kaligiunte’ was sung with the right gait. Neraval and swarams at ‘baaguga shri raghu ramuni padamula’ were elaborate and very neatly presented. Sankaranarayanan who was playing along with the compositions and manodharma parts in a perfectly fitting manner, showcased the many nuances of

playing mridangam in his tani avarthanam, ending with a very interesting korvai.

Aishwarya presented the khamas javali ‘Naari mani’ and Swati Thirunal’s surutti padam ‘Alasara parithapam’ after the main item. True to her style, she rendered both the javali and padam with much elegance.

Each of the artists on stage showcased the best of their styles making the concert an amazing experience

Bilahari in grand style - Aditya Madhavan

S SIVAKUMAR

Though one had come rather late, as 'Kanmaniye Solladi' (Mazhavai Chidhambara Bharathi) was being heard with its swaras, all eventful but brief, there was an air of expectation in Aditya Madhavan's concert at our sabha. Having listened to him last year, one could already see the great promise he held.

There you are. Came an alapana of Bilahari, where the elements were so mixed in it that you could say this is probably one of the best versions this raga had ever seen. There was an amazing clarity in his voice and it seemed to be an altogether new approach to open-throated singing, unlike that of jambavans of yesteryears. He must have put in considerable effort and methods to get to the pitch-perfect status in the melkalams with panache. Further Aditya Madhavan also handled this staying at the lower registers too with ease and equilibrium. His various gamakas were given a different orientation.



A debate was running within about what next. The song, could it be 'Dorakuna' or 'Tholijanma' or 'Inthakananandhamemi'? The cat was out of the bag as it happened to be 'Najeevaadhara', a six line jem, which carried a chittaswaram too.

There is a saying in Malayalam, Podi Podichu (You have achieved, my boy!). After hearing all the stanzas of 'Chinnanji Chiru Kiliye' that was sung (should one mention whose it is?) one honestly felt that this deserves a Podi Podichu!

Violinist Bhargav Tumkur had his mind well prepared to handle the sangati-laden

Bilahari song and contributed giving izhaippus appropriately for the rest of the concert.

The mridangist (Kishore Ramesh) and Khanjira vidwan (Nerkunam Dr. Shankar) their accompanying style for this particular song (Chinnanji Chiru Kiliye) was way different from that adopted for the others songs. Here it was characterised by the gentlest of touches. The laya vidwans during their Thani had finely rounded endings and stood competitive in exhibiting their skills.

A full course treat by Vivek Sadasivam

R BHARATHWAJ

As a performing musician, what each vidwan wishes is to present as much possible within the given time. Vivek Sadasivam accomplished this effortlessly and with a thumping effect.

Starting off with a rare Nattai urupadi 'kamalambike', a composition of Jayachamaraja Wodeyar it was going to be a brisk concert already. A serene alapanai of Sama followed by 'Shantamuleka', was indeed in tune with the starting line, 'Shantamuleka saukyam ledhu.'

After a quick 'samAna rahite' In Saranga Tarangini, Vivek presented an elaborate and gripping Thodi. Dikshithar's magnum opus 'dAkshAyaNi abhayAmbike' was rendered in a emotive manner with detailed neraval and swarams at the anupallavi line 'dlkshA santushTa mAnase'.

Sayee Rakshith excelled on the violin, offering both strong support and demonstrating his expertise during solo segments. Sai Raghavan on mridangam and Vellattanjoor Sreejith on ghatam also provided excellent accompaniment,



enhancing the overall performance.. They played an elaborate tani.

When the average rasika would expect winding up items, Vivek chose a crisp pallavi in Surati. The alapanai showcased the nuances of the rAgam and the tAnam was rather good. 'Parama purusha Parthasarathe dayanidhe mAm pAhi' was the pallavi set in Kanda tripata, with tistra in the poorvangam and chatusram in the uttarangam. The pallavi was effortlessly

elaborated with multiple Kala pramanams. Sayee Rakshith gave fitting responses. There were ragamalika swarams in Nalinakanti and Ranjani. Sai Raghavan and Sreejith played a quick tani in this intricate talam. The concert ended with Muthu Thandavar kriti 'Innamum oru thalam' set to behag.

Vivek Sadasivam and his team's was a wonderful concert neatly presented by an able team of competent artists.

Hyderabad Brothers Seshachary's persona guides Raghavachari


S SIVAKUMAR

This artist commences the song with the word 'Vicharamu', and then 'Maakelara' appends itself to it, to become Tyagaraja's Ravichandrika krithi, 'Maakelara Vicharamu'. What a way of unearthing, this! All was happening here this way at "Hyderabad Brothers", Daruri Raghavachari's concert at our sabha.

Next in order was a Patnam treasure (pokkisham), 'Garudagamana Samayamidhe' in Nagaswaravali. This had a clinching pith alapana. One wonders how many would have taken this tricky raga for its delineation. This at once, spelt variety.

Kalyani had an un-kalyani like beginning and as it progressed, was just a pleasurable sangati downpour, the rain-Gods' bounty without notwithstanding! One could hear Kalyani now whispering and sometimes it even roared. And still embraced you with all its might! "Wahs" galore! One was left wondering whether this is the same seemingly silent partner, who is now matching phrase for phrase with that of his brother Seshachary, constantly reminding us of Seshachary's persona who is around somewhere, here. In Raghavachary's, alapana today, every phrase was a culmination point, zarus came for the asking, confident briga fireworks every now and then, appearing then reappearing reassuringly! The song of course was 'Sundari Nee Divya Rupamu.'

And now the litmus test in the form of a single composition, Tyagaraja's



glorious Pahirama Dhootha! There is some controversy vis-à-vis the raga, Shadvidha Margini or Vasantha Varali. Does it matter? We got to listen to it, the way the Hyderabad brothers used to sing, the way OST used to render. That's sufficient. From Raghavachari this came with more beautifications, vivadhi swara holds, the "Pranakumara" landing where your heart could afford to skip a beat or two. We were in the city of joy!

L Ramakrishnan, on the violin who has acquired an omnipresent status, took his own standing to great heights with a Kalyani and Nagaswaravali that had chosen phrases, bhava-filled and expressed the creativity of this bow-wielder in no small measure. His neraval and kalpana swaraprastharas were never humdrum but imaginative in their pursuits.

Trivandrum Balaji (mridangam), the brothers' close associate, with Udupi Sridhar (Ghatam) gave a thani of

substance and laya adornments at appropriate places, arudhis and thundered their way to offering layanubhava at its loftiest. Their accompanying style on the whole, told us a lot about laya nuances.

A couple of padams/javalis professed to be the Hyderabad brothers' favorites appeared towards the end. And one had to ask oneself, "Why is this concert ending at all!"

And the last word! We very well know that you are missing your brother (mee thammudu) badly! We too!

Vidwan Daruri Seshachary, the younger brother of the famed Hyderabad brothers unfortunate, breathed his last, on February 24th this year. He was known for his more robust, deep and resonant singing. The brothers together have recorded for posterity almost "all" of Tyagaraja's compositions even during the cassette era, to give the public affordable listening.



Sri Sri Sisters, Sriya Srinivas and Sreeja Srinivas, delighted the audience with their energetic performance, effortlessly balancing high energy with a relaxed pace where needed. Their concert showcased their synergy and musical prowess. Accompanying them were R. Srikriti on the violin and Punnur Aravind Kaushik on the mridangam, providing excellent support. The afternoon concert was a blend of talent and youthfulness.

Rasaanubhava at its best

SHARADHA VENKAT

Kunnakudi Balamurali Krishna's concert commenced with the evocative Naattai ragam, setting the mood for a devotional journey. The evening opened with Saint Thyagaraja's 'Ninne bhajana' in Adi Talam, a vibrant piece that captured the audience's attention. The brisk chittaiswarams and dynamic kalpanaswarams in 'sitanaatha' immersed the listeners in the spiritual essence of the evening.

Thiruppavai of the day, 'Aazhi Mazhai Kanna' in Varali began with a stirring Viruttam from Nammalwar's Thiruvaimozhi (3814), "Azhīyān Azhi Amararkkum Appaalaan." The rendition masterfully transitioned from gentle drizzles to thunderous storms, reflecting the grandeur of divine rain during the niraval on the line 'Sara mazhai pōl vazha ulaginil peididai'. The imaginary of rain evoked by the music captivated the audience, blending lyrical beauty with vivid musical expression.

A brief yet impactful raga alapana of Simhavahini (a janya of Sarasangi) followed, setting a reflective tone for Thyagaraja's 'Nenarunchera naa pai ni chala'. Rendered with profound karunya bhava, this piece tugged at the listeners' hearts. The pace shifted with a lively Vasantha piece, Thyagaraja's 'Vaatadmaja Sowmitri' from 'Seethamma Mayamma'.



This fast-paced kriti transitioned the audience from the freshness of spring to the intensity of a cyclone. The seamless interplay between vocalist Balamurali and Akkarai Subhalakshmi, accompanied by the rhythmic brilliance of Shertalai Ananthakrishnan and Anirudh Athreya, added a thrilling dynamic to the performance.

While singing kalpana swarams the essence of the raga was highlighted around madhyamam to portray Maayamma - Seetham-ma-ma-ma...

Sahana was the concert's main focus. Balamurali's vocal finesse captured the delicate stress and nuances of the raga reflecting a musical experience replicating the fingering on the veenai. His mastery shone in the tarastayi sancharams that effortlessly soared to the shadjam. Papanasam Sivan's 'Chittam

Irangadhadhen Ayya – Senthil Velaiyya', steeped in karuna rasa, brought out the emotional depth of the raga. The chowka kala swarams paired with challenging janta swarams were executed with skill, while the rhythmic exchanges between Ananthakrishnan and Anirudh were nothing short of mesmerising.

The concert's contemplative mood shifted to the warmth and love of Radha's longing for Krishna which was poetically depicted with Jayadevar's Ashtapadi 'Lalitha Lavanga' in raga Lalith.

The concert concluded featuring an evergreen tillana in Pahadi by Lalgudi Jayaraman and the traditional Tiruppugazh, 'Erumayil Eri Vilayadum Mugam', ending with Mangalam. The evening left the audience enthralled, carrying home the essence of musical divinity.

Pantula Rama's Concert: Elegant and Emotive

TEAM SANGEETH SARATHY

The concert of Pantula Rama accompanied by MSN Murthy on the violin, J Vaidhyathan on the mridangam, and Chandrasekara Sharma on the ghatam was a sumptuous treat of classicism and artistry.

The performance began with the Bhairavi ata tala varnam - Viribhoni, setting an auspicious tone. A delightful rendition of the vivadi raga Kanthamani featuring Thyagaraja's 'Palinthuvo Palimpavo,' with a measured and enjoyable exploration of the raga. The majestic 'Anupama Gunambudhi' in Atana elevated the concert to new heights.

A detailed alapana of Abheri led to the soulful 'Nagu momu kana leni', rendered with pleasant sancharas. The exciting exchanges with MSN Murthy's violin was exemplary, in both the alapana and his thoughtful replies during the kalpanaswaras.

A quick 'Kalala nerchina' in Deepakam of Thyagaraja was followed by a grand RTP in Sankarabharanam. The raga and tanam were expansive, culminating in a pallavi featuring the lines "Govinda Mukunda Paramananda Kasturiranga."

The percussion team was outstanding, with J. Vaidhyathan's nuanced accompaniment and Chandrasekara Sharma's subtle support adding depth to each kriti. Their creativity came to the fore in the impressive tani avartanam.

The concert concluded with Purandaradasa's 'Thamboori Meetidava' in Sindhu Bhairavi and Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna's delightful Brindavani tillana, leaving the audience yearning for more. That was a memorable evening of rich musical experience!



Beyond Notes: The Intricate Interplay of Voice and Instrument



RAJAGOPALAN VENKATRAMAN

Rasikas were treated to an informative and thought-provoking lecture demonstration by the trio of Violin Vidwan R K Shriramkumar, mridangam vidwan Arunprakash and vocalist cum violinist Amritha Murali.

Amritha Murali began the session by rendering the kriti 'Sri Gananatham Bhajare' in the raga Eesha Manohari. The lecdem covered the aspects of the complementary nature of vocal and instrumental music and how expertise in one form enriches the other.

Captured below are snippets gathered from the lively interaction amongst the three top ranking performing artistes today in the Carnatic Music world:

Gitam, vadyam and nrityam are the three components of our Sangitam. When it comes to the vadyam, most gurus have emphasised that it should be played exactly like how the vocalist sings. On the other hand, there are also some schools which suggest exploring the full possibilities of the instruments and going beyond vocalising the kritis. Traditionally, many of our vocalists were good at playing the instruments and the converse is true too.

A singer's voice itself is an instrument. It is so delicate and intricate that performers need to take proper care of it. No science can ever produce the 'saariram' of a human being. While accompanying a singer, the bhava of the singer needs to be brought out in the violin by the violinist. They should get the sound of the raga being sung. While swaras form the foundation of ragas, the texture and sound are very important, be it Carnatic or Hindustani or whichever music form.

It is true of singers too. They need to have a deep understanding of the 'Carnatic sound.' They should sing with



complete integrity to the musical sound. Swaras come much later. The swaras are like the spelling of a word. We don't think of the spelling or etymology when we speak. Similar is the case with musical language. Yes, one needs a deep knowledge of swaras but should sing beyond the swaras.

When playing ragas like Sankarabharanam or Ananda Bhairavi, the swaras need to be in sync with the sound of the raga. Sruti alignment and laya are extremely important. The bhava of the singer needs to be brought out in the instrument. The sound matters.

Violinists must understand the lyrics and have them in mind while playing, rather than just replicating the swaras of the raga. 'Sthana shuddham' is crucial, ensuring every note is in its correct place, while swara gnAnam is also essential. Similarly, singers benefit from knowing how to play an instrument, especially when performing ragamalika swaras. Understanding raga lakshana aids in singing an alapana, but felicity with instruments significantly improves swara singing.

Violinists need to be cognizant of the danger of losing track of the sAhityam and just playing the swaras. They need to develop an acute sense of when to play at which stAy - mandara, ati mandara and mel. A fantastic case in point is mahavidwan VV Subramanyam, playing for MS Amma.

Neraval is an acid test for the musicians on stage. For a neraval to come out well, the musicians need

to have command over the sahityam, raga, tala, kalapramanam and avartam. Everything needs to be in place for a pleasant listening experience.

Inculcating tala happens when one plays a raga or kriti on an instrument. Gamaka structures come in handy while singing ragamalika.

Doyen MS Amma being a Vainika herself, would say "Don't oscillate a gamaka more than once". Rishabam in Kalyani is a case in point. The right amount of asaivu is very important. 'Ma' in 'Akshaya Linga Vibho, speaks volume about the sense of proportion needed.

Amritha demonstrated how to vocalise the swaras in ragas such as Devagandhari. Shriramkumar emphasised that the sound matters so much here. A quick demo of the kritis 'Kshitija Ramanam' and 'VinarAdanA manavi' followed.

How does all this play out for a mridangam vidwan? Arunprakash mentioned that 'rasanai' is of foremost importance. It is paramount to accompany the music on stage. It is important for mridangists to have a keen sangita gnAnam. For example, the Bhairavi kriti 'KoluvamarEgata' and 'mAyammA' in Ahiri both are sung in adi talam 2 kalai. Yet the progression of sangatis determine how to play the mridangam for these kritis.

Also, a mridangam vidwan needs to react, respond and play well to the sound of the raga. The sound of a raga like Purvikalyani is much mellower than that of Atana. The mridangam player should comprehend this innately.

In summary, 'vak' and 'vadyam' should complement each other, there should be no 'vakkuvadam' on the stage!



Crossing the t's and dotting the i's - Prince Rama Varma and Amrutha Venkatesh's invaluable Lecdem

S SIVAKUMAR

At the outset one has to start with a disclaimer. The number of aspects that were covered in this particular lecture demonstration (lecdem) had so much of breadth & length & depth that the writer can in no way pay his justice to the "whole". In audit reports, "This does not purport to be..." is commonly used, and the same wording applies here, albeit in a different context.

Vidwan Prince Rama Varma who talked like a Prince, and Vidushi Amrutha who mustered all her observing power, as minutely as she could, combined well to present the many finer aspects of our music. They concentrated their full attention to the sahitya part, keeping with the topic's requirement.

Talking of neraval, they chose the line 'Jatha Roopa' (Deva Deva Kalayami, Mayamalavagowlai) for analysis. How the meaning would get totally distorted if the line is split at the wrong places they asked. This has been carried forward where these mistakes have become legendary ones they added. Similarly one should pay attention to the pallavi Orajupu joochedhi nyayama of Tyagaraja in Kannada Gowla. Sing it like 'Ora joopu Choochedhi Nyayama' wholly and not as 'Ora joopu choo' and terminate it here at this point, to



accommodate the thala. Our attention was also drawn to 'Bantu reethi kolu viya vayya', where it ought to be sung as kolu, and not with an elongation as kōlu (கொலு என்றிருக்க வேண்டும், கொலு அல்ல).

Examine this: Don't close your mouth when the sahityam is still on. This seems obvious to anyone, but only when pointed out and demonstrated, which Amrutha did with several examples. A case in point in general is they demonstrated almost everything in such a way it made it crystal clear, the right way to give the audience aesthetic delight and the wrong way that it raises ones eyebrows.

Voice modulation should be such that harshness should have no place. We should be aware and put to use this in-built mechanism and resort to this at the right

places. We should be clear about when and where to modulate. This also was clarified with as many examples as possible.

Prince stressed on the proper enunciation which is lacking in many musicians both from the past to the present. The point is, it should not be laughed at, or pin-pointed as an accusation, but observed with an intention to seek a course-correction.

Coming to handling of alapana, there is nothing like a standard template that could be adopted. Moreover alapanas are often dictated by the nature of the raga. For instance one cannot uniformly adopt the same method say for an Amruthavarshini and Yadukula Khambodhi. They are streets apart.

As this memorable lecdem was about to close Prince and Amrutha praised the sound engineer, M G Swami, for his intelligent work in respect of sruthi-matching between Amruthas and his own. Towards the end Amrutha made an appeal to "Tamilians" to learn any one language as an extra exercise to circumvent the problem of battling with one 'ga', one 'pa' in Tamil, resulting in wrong pronunciation.

A packed auditorium intently listening to, bore testimony to the seriousness with which they had arrived thither.

Music – sedate and rooted

SIVAPRIYA KRISHNAN

Amrita Murali has carved a name for herself in the Carnatic world and she attracts quite an audience. Her concert at our sabha was sedate and rooted in its core values. Starting with 'Upacharamu' in Bhairavi, she went on to sing a not-so-off heard 'Va Saravana bhava varasiva,' a song in Bilahari by Koteeswara Iyer.

'Nannu Brovu Lalitha' in Lalitha with neraval and swara Kalpana at 'Umasri... Meenakshi' was a neat presentation. 'Balakrishnam Bhavayami' in Gopika Vasantam, a Dikshitar composition stood out for its chastity in rendition. 'Varanarada Narayana' brought some speed to the concert after the earlier songs before she moved onto the Ragam Tanam Pallavi in Sahana. The Pallavi line was 'nee sari samaana deivamu ne gana namma', Adi tala two kalai and was well-structured with the requisite karvais. It



was a breather to listen to the traditional format of a Pallavi line, compared to the cramming of words and nadais, one gets to listen to these days. Her Tanam stood out for its madhyamakala pace, though one felt that the raga alapana needed a little more soul. The Pallavi was handled deftly with ragamalika swaras alternating between her and the violinist, ranging from Kokilapriya to Hamirkalyani, Ahiri, Vagadeeswari, Gangeyabhooshani back to Sahana. 'Adum Chidambaramo' in Behag and 'Krishna Kamalaksha,' a

well-crafted composition like a tarangam, by R K Shriramkumar, gave a perfect conclusion to the concert.

Violinist Kamalakiran Vinjamuri is skillful and intelligent. With more attention and practice, the melody quotient of his playing can surely go up. NC Bharadwaj and Chandrasekara Sharma, now seasoned percussionists, gave their best and truly brought alive the concert. The mridangam volume however soared high and this is something that needs attention in all concerts.

Suryaprakash's Brilliant Tribute to the MMI Legacy


V MOHAN

Suryaprakash's concert carried the unmistakable stamp of the Madurai Mani Iyer (MMI) school, reflecting both its style and kriti selection—a tradition he imbibed through training from T.V. Sankaranarayanan, MMI's nephew. However, his success as a well-rated and a sought-after contemporary vocalist stems not just from his lineage but also from his engaging and enjoyable singing style. Known for his clear, three-octave voice and versatility, Suryaprakash has also excelled as a teacher, composer, and a proponent of Mahakavi Subramanya Bharathi's works, composing and tuning several of the poet's songs.

Starting his concert with 'Diwakara Dhanujam' of Dikshitar, the vara kriti dedicated to Lord Saturn, sung often by MMI, Suryaprakash took up one of the biggest favourites of Madurai Mani Iyer, 'Orajubujosethi Nyayama', in Kannada Gowla. MMI's rasikas will never forget the 'kanakku' swaras he used to embellish this kriti. His unique alapana and swara korvais popularised this raga, despite its limited number of compositions. Suryaprakash delighted rasikas with imaginative kalpana swaras, blending his creativity with MMI's signature patterns. A brief Jyotishwaroopini alapana led to Koteeswara Iyer's 'Gaanamudha Panam,' the most renowned kriti in this rare raga.

The main piece of the concert was Papanasam Sivan's popular kriti 'Kapali Karunai Nilavu Pozhi,' famously associated with MMI for his inimitable style of rendition. Suryaprakash's expansive Mohana raga alapana



showcased imaginative phrases, leading to a satisfying rendition of the kriti and sparkling swara korvais. The ensuing tani by two senior percussionists Thanjavur Murugaboopathy on mridangam and K.V. Gopalakrishnan on kanjira, both trained under legendary masters, was an aural delight, complementing the brilliance of 'Kapali.'

The vocalist's creative brilliance came to the fore in the Ragam Thanam Pallavi (RTP), composed specifically for this concert. Set in Khanda Tripudra tala with a unique twist, it alternated between tisra nadai for beats and chatusra nadai for hand waves, forming a 'Trimukhi' tala inspired by Vidwan Balamuralikrishna's innovations, Suryaprakash said. While the technicalities might elude lay listeners, the RTP's aesthetic appeal in Subapantuvrali took the listeners to a deep emotional state. The alapana featured a stunning use of 'Sruti Bedam' with Brindavana Saranga, showcasing the vocalist's creativity and his impeccable sruti control.

Suryaprakash treated the rasikas to a sumptuous fare of 'thukkadas' in the post pallavi session, including Hindustani ragas Shuddha Sarang and Mian Ki Malhar.

The Bharatiar composition "Theertha Karaiyini" sung in Mukhari and Shuddha Sarang stood out, alongside short, engaging pieces on Lord Muruga. The concert concluded with the Sivan kriti "Karpagame Kann paarai," preceded by the iconic "English Note" of Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar, a piece elevated to legendary status it enjoys now in Carnatic music by MMI.

On the violin was senior vidwan V.V.S. Murari, son of Nadayogi V.V. Subramanian from the Swati Tirunal tradition. A composer, teacher, and collaborator with Western music, Murari provided splendid support to the vocalist, elevating the concert. His renditions of Mohanam and Subha Pantuvrali, including the use of 'Sruti Bedam,' mirrored the vocalist's approach and offered a rich listening experience. The percussionists played an equally crucial role in enhancing the concert.

Suryaprakash delivered yet another memorable concert, blending all the musical elements his audience anticipates combining amazing degrees of freshness and elegance.

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Vijay Siva: Classy classisicm

TEAM SANGEETH SARATHY

For those who think that razzmatazz is what makes a performance successful, Vijay Siva's houseful concert proved the contrary. Absolute clarity of a voice that can compete with a tambura, absolute adherence to classical values, absolute avoidance of anything even remotely resembling gimmicks, absolute loyalty to the magnificent patantharam handed down from his legendary guru, absolute control over voice, absolute oneness with the music, in short, absolute focus and commitment to delivering his 100 percent, this is what makes Vijay Siva a Master of this Art, who can stand defiantly upright in the face of any influx of talented young stars.

It was typical DK Jayaraman fare almost all the way. This in itself won most of the rasikas' hearts as could be seen in the delighted applause that followed the very first item 'Orajupuchu,' which Vijay Siva decorated with a sparkling yet straightforward display of neravel and swara at the beautiful line - Deena Rakshaka. The Raga alapanas of Poorvikalyani (Parama Pavana), and Sri (Karunajoodu - such a rarely heard piece!) were brief yet shimmered with substance. Thodi, (Munnu Ravana) gave some heart stopping moments, especially the leisurely neravel at 'Raja Raja' which edged the listeners closer to the higher levels of consciousness. Here, mention must be made of R.K.Shriramkumar's alapana, which was like Thodi essence being poured out of a golden pot. His sweet strings just filled the



hall with the ebb and flow of the raga. Can we talk of a main piece without mentioning the thani? The percussion duo of Manoj Siva and Tripunithura Radhakrishnan went beyond a top-class thani. Their presence as co artistes to Vijay Siva seemed tailor made for each sangathi almost as if they were part of the melody team.

Special highlights of the concert - a scintillating and rare 'Samayamidhe' (Harikeshanallur Muthiah Bagavatar, Budhamanohari), the rendition of 'Sri Bhargavi' (Muthuswamy Dikshitar Mangalakaishiki) with explanations offered by Shriramkumar, an exquisite alapana of Devagandhari, followed by a Pallavi and pithy one avarthanam ragamalika swaras.

Lastly, but probably the most poignant segment of the concert - a Manji viruttham from the Natarajar Pathu followed by 'Varugalamo' that created an awed hush, and visibly moved the audience, and the artiste himself. No words to describe the role of the three accompanists for this song. To sum up the concert - the standing ovation said it all.

A bouquet of rare flowers

R BHARATHWAJ

One of the assets that a singer dreams for, is a good voice. Swarathmika Srikanth is abundantly blessed in that. She chose to begin with Muthiah Bhagavathar's Gambeera nattai varNam 'Sri raja mathangi,' with a quick round of swarams.

She then presented many rare uruppadis in this concert. A long lost 'Rookalu padi velu' in Todi was rendered next. This Thyagaraja kriti was brisk and led us to an expansive Hamsanandhi alapanai from both Swarathmika and Shreelakshmi bhat on violin. 'Needhu Mahima' of Muthiah Bhagavathar was sung well with exchange of swarams between the vocalist and the violinist. Next was Suddhananda Bharathi's composition, 'Narthanam seyyeno' in Bahudari, which was beautifully presented.

The prime uruppadi was 'Devi jagatjanani' of Swathi Thirunaal.



Shankarabaranam ragam was developed in detail by both Swarathmika and Shreelakshmi. Neraval and swarams were elaborate and classical. Nikshit Puttur provided able support on the mridangam. He played very beautifully for the kritis and his tani was presented well.

The concluding number was a composition of M Srinivasan, 'Sadguru natham' in praise of Kanchi Sankaracharya, set to tune by Swarathmika's father and guru, G Srikanth. All the three artists on stage gave their best to make this concert a grand one.



An evening of splendour with Ramakrishnan Murthy

Ramakrishnan Murthy's concert was an evening filled with musical brilliance and aesthetic depth. His performance showcased a perfect blend of technical expertise and emotive expression, leaving the audience in awe. The concert began with Subbaraya Sastry's 'Ninnu Sevinchina' in Yadukula Kambhoji, followed by Patnam Subramanya Ayyar's 'Ninnu jeppa karanamemi' in Mandari, enriched with niraval at 'Kalalolaina Venkateshayani' and vibrant kalpana swarams. The interplay between Ramakrishnan and violinist Vittal Rangan was particularly noteworthy, as their harmony spanned two distinct octaves with impeccable synchronisation.

A glimpse of Hamir Kalyani followed, where Ramakrishnan rendered Thyagaraja's 'Manamuleda' set to 2-kalai Adi Talam. His soothing Chowka Kala Kalpana Swarams elevated the composition, evoking a sense of serenity among the listeners.

The center-piece of the evening was undoubtedly the Todi ragam.

Ramakrishnan's intricate and engaging alapana, complemented by Vittal's masterful violin, set the stage for Thyagaraja's 'Kaddhanu Vaariki'. The niraval at 'Baddu Tappaka bhajiyinche' (Suswaramutho) was executed with profound depth, followed by an exquisite kalpana swaram and an enthralling tani avarthanam. Delhi Sairam's captivating rhythmic patterns during the tani avarthanam were a standout, seamlessly complementing Ramakrishnan's artistry.

The concert also included a heartfelt rendition of Papanasam Sivan's 'Thunai Purindarul tharuna Maadhavaa' in Suddha Hindolam, which served as a prelude to an extraordinary RTP. The chosen pallavi, 'Mozhi Pala Irundum Vizhigalal Kadhaigal Kooridum Anbe' by vidwan Arun Prakash, was set in Gowla with a raga tana malika that explored Gowla, Nalina Kanthi, Nattai, Varali, and more. The RTP, set to Kanta Jaati Adi Talam with the eduppu from the second dhrutam, was handled with finesse by the entire team, much to the delight of the rasikas.



 **SHARADHA VENKAT**



Post-RTP, the concert transitioned to lighter yet equally impactful pieces. Ramakrishnan delivered Purandara Dasa's 'Devaki Nandana Nandamukunda' in Navroj, followed by a moving virutham, 'Karavindena Padaravindam' from Bala Mukundashtakam and Swati Tirunal's 'Bajat Murali Murari' in a rare raga Manorama, tuned by Balamuralikrishna.

The grand finale featured Lalgudi Jayaraman's popular Behag tillana, followed by a soulful Mangalam, bringing the concert to a close. Ramakrishnan's matured artistry, creativity in ragam, niraval, and kalpana swarams and his seamless coordination with the accompanists were the hallmarks of this memorable evening. Vittal Rangan on the violin and Delhi Sairam on the mridangam delivered outstanding support, elevating the entire experience.

In every aspect, Ramakrishna Murthy's performance was a celebration of Carnatic music, leaving the audience yearning for more.

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A classical concert with musical wisdom



Sangeetham is more enjoyable with gyaanam and vidwat. This was rather evident in the concert of Papanasam Ashok Ramani. He chose to present a list of well-known compositions to the delight of the audience.

The concert started with a brisk rendition of Begada varNam 'Intha chalamu' and followed with 'Saraseeruhanapriye' in Nattai. Ashok Ramani and Raghu on the violin exchanged a few rounds of swarams. A delightful alapanai of Sriranjani was followed by a neat rendition of Thyagaraja's 'Bhuvini dasudane' with detailed neraval and swarams.

To follow up with Sahana after such an elaborate Sriranjani, this man showed his class. A detailed alapanai retaining the raga bhavam with Papanasam Sivan's 'Chitham irangagadhenayya' was very emotive. Thyagaraja's 'Kanna thandri naapai' with fire brand swarms made a good mood changing piece.

Ashok Ramani chose Kalyani as the main ragam. His raga alapanai and Raghu's response were both classical.



Thyagaraja's 'Ethavunara' was rendered in a gripping manner with detailed neraval swarams. NC Bharadwaj on the mridangam played with much precision in his strokes. He was very sensitive in his playing and gave very good support for the entire concert. Ravi Balasubramanian on the ghatam added much classical tone to the concert. The tani they shared had rich patterns and was overall much enjoyable.

When you come from a lineage of composers, it is but natural to include their compositions. Ashok Ramani rendered yet another of his grandfather's

compositions, in Kapi "Sodhanai sumai" and his mother's Sumanesa Ranjani composition 'Parthasarathe', both with suitable viruthams. A quick rendition of Dhanashri thillana and 'Karpagame' in Madhyamavati led to the curtains.

Ashok Ramani gave us a tour of good music with his intricate patterns and many interesting classical sancharams carefully interwoven appropriately. There was no hurdle to the wonderful music he presented, despite the vocal challenges. His quick and seamless transition from one item to another was a stamp to his vidwat.

Keerthana's unique presentation



Good music from a powerful voice is always a listeners' delight. And when the music is classical and appealing, it hits the rasika in the correct places to make the experience enjoyable.

Beginning with a slokam Sri Kantho in Todi, J B Keerthana presented Koteeswara Iyer's 'Appane kapali' after a brief Akshiptika of Todi. Brisk neraval and swarams at 'seppa naan tharamaa' were good. Thyagaraja's 'Devaadi deva Sadasiva' in Sindhuramakriya was sang with many rounds of swarams, keeping up the mood and tempo created.

A leisurely and gripping rendition of 'Ranganayakam,' Dikshithar's Nayaki master piece, gave much grandeur to the concert. The DKP-DKJ paatantharam was much evident. Keerthana rendered another Koteeswara Iyer composition, 'Naada nilai kanduruga' in Gayakapriya with good energy.

The main alapanai was Hamsanadam. The particularly expansive delineation was good to listen. Karaikal Venkata-



subramanian gave an equally good response. Oothukkadu Venkata Kavi's 'Kalyana rama' was rendered in an elaborate manner with detailed neraval and svarams. Venkatasubramanian gave appropriate replies in all his parts throughout the concert. Sai Raghavan on the mridangam was neat and good. His playing was as beautiful as his multicoloured mridangam! Harihara

Subramanian on the ghatam provided much appreciated support. They shared a wonderful tani with an intricate korvai. The concert ended with the ragamalika number 'Aaraa amudhe arase' a Thayumanavar verse.

An energetic concert with a good set of artists, that created a lasting impression on the rasikas.

Divine Harmony: Morning Melody by Anahita and Apoorva


SHARADHA VENKAT

Sisters Anahita and Apoorva began their concert on a bright note with the much-loved Nattakurinji Pada Varnam. The sisters' rendition showcased mastery, presenting the Purvangam in two speeds and the Uttarangam in durita gati. This momentum seamlessly transitioned into Thyagaraja's Mandari Raga 'Paraloka Bhaya,' where durita-kaala kalpana swarams highlighted their rhythmic precision. The remarkable sancharas spanning all octaves were both technically and aesthetically appealing.

Oothukkadu Venkata Kavi's 'Ennathan Inbam Kandayo' in Devagandhari resonated profoundly in the auditorium. The sisters' ability to evoke the raga bhava, coupled with their anubhava and sahitya bhava, created an immersive atmosphere, leaving the audience spellbound as if transported to the realm of Kuzhal Isai.

The duo, along with Sayee Rakshit on the violin, delivered a soulful performance of Koteswara Iyer's (Enaku) 'Edaiya Gathi' in Chala Naattai marked by its ingenious raga mudra in the charanam. 'Thal Dan Gathi' phrase became the perfect platform for exploring kalpana swarams with the trio emphasising swaraksharam with finesse. Their collective ease and coordination were a testament to their artistry.

The highlight of the concert was undoubtedly the rendition of Keeravani. Periyasami Thooran's 'Punniyam Oru Kodi



Purindeno' was a fitting tribute, completing a hat trick of Tamil keerthanams. The sisters alternated turns throughout the alapana instead of one of them taking up an entire elaboration. The interplay between them and Sayee Rakshit embarked on a mesmerising journey through Keeravani, navigating its intricate phrases and subtle nuances with mastery. This set the stage for the emotional welcome of Acharyal with 'Ennilla Inbam'. With total surrender, the sisters brought alive the sahitya, especially during the niraval on the evocative phrase: "Annai Kamatshi Pole, Anbe Vadivai Vandar."

Through their soulful elaboration, the imagery of talir nadai, tullal nadai, and vega nadai of Paramacharya, alongside Annai Kamatshi, became vivid for every listener. Such mature singing at their age is commendable, and the audience was so engrossed that even the rhythmic tala remained unmarked in reverential silence. The celebratory mood continued with the

arrival of Anbe vadivaanavar.

B. Sivaraman on the mridangam and Sowmiyanarayanan on the ghatam made the Tani Avarthanam an unforgettable experience. Their creative flair, versatility, and technical brilliance stood out, while Sowmiyanarayanan's engaging body language added a unique charm. Together, they provided unwavering support to the performers throughout.

The concert concluded with Kanaka Daasa's 'Baaro Krishnayya' in Maund and Ravikiran's Tillana in Hamsanadam. The sisters' harmonious delivery, marked by balanced vocalisation and pleasant mannerisms, brought the curtain down on a divine musical experience. Their ability to blend seamlessly without overpowering one another was nothing short of bliss.

This morning melody will remain etched in the hearts of the audience, a perfect blend of technical virtuosity and soulful artistry.



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V. Deepika and V. Nandhika presented a precise vocal concert, showcasing their harmonious singing in unison. The duo who are also violinists, engaged in enjoyable exchanges of raga alapana and kalpanaswarams with Haritha Narayanan on the violin. Rohit Prasad on the mridangam and Samyukta Sreeram on the ghatam provided solid rhythmic support, adding depth to the neatly presented performance. This vibrant young brigade truly made the afternoon delightful.