



SRI PARTHASARATHY SWAMI SABHA

Email : parthasabha@gmail.com

<http://parthasarathyswamisabha.com/>



Dec. 18, 2024

● For Private Circulation Only

VOLUME 9 • ISSUE
2

**SANGEETHA
SARATHY**

The Instrumental Influence on Indian Classical Music



SUNDARAMAN CHINTAMANI

On December 15, 2024, vidwan Sriram Parasuram delivered a captivating lecture demonstration on 'The Instrumental Idiom: The Immense Impact and Contribution of Musical Instruments to Indian Classical Music'. He was accompanied by Srividya Vadlamani on the Veena and Haridwar Bhuvan on the violin.

Sriram emphasised the profound influence of musical instruments on vocal music, particularly in areas such as *shruthi suddham* (pitch accuracy), tonal consistency, and the beauty and perfection of swarams. He highlighted how instrumentalists inspire vocalists and cited maestros like Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, T.R. Mahalingam, T.N. Rajarathinam Pillai, Lalgudi Jayaraman, and M.S. Gopalakrishnan for their significant contributions.

Challenging the common belief that instrumentalists should emulate vocalists, Sriram argued the reverse—that vocalists should aspire to sing like instrumentalists.



He delved deeply into the nuances of the Veena and violin, explaining how vocalists aim to replicate the weight (*azhutham*) and intensity of pulled Veena strings. According to him, this technique shapes musical phrases and brings out the *raga swaroopam* (essence) of a raga.

He also discussed the historical importance of stringed instruments such as Dhruva Veena, Chala Veena, Rudra Veena, Ravana Veena, Vichitra Veena, Sarangi, and Shatatantri Veena (Santoor). These instruments have enriched the Indian classical music tradition and continue to guide vocalists in their artistic journey.

With the support of his accompanying artists, Sriram demonstrated various

ragas, including Kalyani, Thodi, Dhanyasi, Begada, Shanmukhapriya, Sahana, and Charukesi, to illustrate his points.

Sriram urged *rasikas* (music connoisseurs) to develop a deeper appreciation for the subtleties of instrumental music, which can significantly enhance their understanding and enjoyment of classical music.

In conclusion, he remarked that the vast ocean of Indian classical music owes much of its vocal traditions to the influence of instrumental idioms. Aspiring musicians, he advised, should listen to instrumentalists to broaden their musical horizons and refine their art.



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Shri Mohan Kurup
Smt. Vijaya Muthukumar

நல்லதோர் வீணை

 சாரதா வெங்கட்

கனராக பஞ்சரத்தினத்தின் முதல் ராகமான நாட்டை வர்ணத்துடன் கம்பீரமாக ஆரம்பித்த கச்சேரி நிறைவாக வாசித்த பிருந்தாவன சாரங்கா வரை தொடர்ச்சியாகவும் தொய்வு இல்லாமலும் ரசிகர்களுக்கு விருந்தாக அமைந்தது.

ராகங்களின் மீது கலைஞர்கள் செலுத்தும் அன்பை ராகங்கள் பிரதிபலிக்கின்றன. ஆனந்த பைரவியில் அருமையான பிடிகளும் ஜாரு கமகங்களும் கல்பனா ஸ்வரங்களும் ஒவ்வொரு முறையும் 'மரீவேரே கதி' வாசிக்கும் பொழுது நிகழ்த்திய புதுமையும் இசைக்கருவி வாசிக்கும் விற்பன்னர்களின் கற்பனைத்திறன் கணக்கில் அடங்காதவை என்பதை நிரூபித்தன.

அன்றைய கச்சேரியின் அமைப்பும் பாடல்களின் தேர்வும் நிர்மலாவின் ஆழ்ந்த அனுபவத்தை அறிவித்தன.

The success of playing an instrument is in bringing out the potential of the instrument - said Shri Sriram Parasuram in his lecture demonstration earlier.

இந்த மேற்கோள் அவரைத் தொடர்ந்து வீணை இசைத்த நிர்மலாவிற்காகவே கூறப்பட்டவை போல அமைந்தது.

லதாங்கி ராக ஆலாபனையை அடுத்து நான்கு ராக தானமாலிகை. ராக ஆலாபனையில் நாதமும் பாவமும் மூன்று ஸ்தாயிகளிலும் வெளிப்பட்டன என்றால் தந்திகளை மீட்டும் பல வித ஜாலம் தானத்தில் வெளிப்பட்டது. தொடர்ந்து வந்த அபராம பக்தி கருதியிலும் இவற்றை அனுபவிக்க முடிந்தது.

வயலின் வாசித்த R ஹேமலதாவின் அரவணைப்பில் அற்புதங்கள் பல. வீணையைத் தொடர்ந்தும் எதிரொலித்தும்



தன் தனித்தன்மையை வெளிப்படுத்தியும் கை கோர்த்து சென்றது அருமையிலும் அருமை. ராக ஆலாபனையிலும் தானம் வாசிப்பிலும் ஸ்வரப்பிரஸ்தாரங்களிலும் அவரது பாண்டித்தியம் மிளிரியது.

வயலின் நிழல் என்றால் நிர்மலா என்னும் பிரவாகத்தின் இரு கரைகள் மற்றும் கண்கள் மிருதங்கம் வாசித்த பரத்வாஜமும் கஞ்சிரா வாசித்த K V கோபாலகிருஷ்ணனும் ஆவார்கள். வீணை கச்சேரிக்கு ஏற்ப அடக்கமாகவும் ஆதரவாகவும் அரவணைத்து தனி ஆவர்த்தனத்தில் ஆர்ப்பரித்தார்கள்.

கச்சேரியின் இறுதிப் பகுதியில் பிருந்தாவன சாரங்காவில் கலியுக வரதன் கம்பீரமாய் வலம் வந்தான்.

சங்கீத நாடக அகாதமியின் விருது பெற்ற கலைமாமணி திருமதி கல்பகம் சுவாமிநாதனின் வழி வந்த நிர்மலா ராஜசேகர் இன்று அனைவருக்கும் மகிழ்ச்சியையும் மன நிறைவையும் தன் நல்லதோர் வீணை கானத்தால் வழங்கினார்.

ஆசியாவிலேயே தொன்மையான நமது சபாவிற்கு தன் மனமார்ந்த நன்றியை தெரிவித்துக் கொண்டார்.

Preethi Sethuraman – the future beckons

 S SIVAKUMAR

To the best of my knowledge and belief, Preethi Sethuraman, who sang at the just-after-lunch-slot, is after the bhani of Sowmya. There were many indicators pointing towards this observation. Preethi exudes promise and confidence as an artiste and the future belongs to such women and men.

Khambodhi (Thiruvadi Charanam) Lalitha (Hiranmayim) became the main and sub-main. Understandably Khambodhi was given "more" attention in terms of alapana than Lalitha.

Both alapanas had brigas that were swift and stately, no hiccups. Sruthi alignment was flawless and so was its long-holding too! All this aided in doing justice to both the alapanas in their style and substance. While the swaras had both set patterns and spontaneous elements in them, they never exceeded their limits. The earlier Atana's (Anupama gunambudhi) swaras were stretched beyond a certain point. Better discretion could have been applied. Kalpana swaras for Khambodhi were given their due flexibility. The song selection matched the time requirements of this specific slot and was also done with a keen sense of proportion.

Sindhu Rageswari's violin had imaginative skills and her accompanying style never extended beyond that of Preethi's



essays, well-contained and self-contained. Swara replies were maintained adopting the policy of a concert-ready answering methods, ideal for an accompanist.

Jayendra Kumar on the mridangam wove appropriate korvais and terminated at the right spots, much appreciated by the main singer. During the thani he somehow lost his way and was searching for a closing-spot, and found it finally. He collected himself with a smile and you know, all is well that ends well.

I am rather critical of the afternoon concerts on account of poor audience presence. But around 50 for a 12.30 slot is well....a good number.

A RAKTHI FEST



Each musician has a preference and choice in what they present and where. An intelligent musician would always know what to present where. This intelligence was rather evident in this bright Sunday afternoon concert.



Just coming out from seasonal rains, this warm concert by Srirangam Venkatanagarajan and his team was much enjoyable. He chose to present a lineup of rakthi ragams such as Saurashtam, Reetigaula, Yadukula kambhoji and Poorvikalyani with a lot of bhava and made it a festival of rakthi ragams

The concert began with a rare varnam in Kalyanavasantham invoking lord Ganesha composed by vidwan TM Thyagarajan. Venkatanagarajan chose to present Suryamurthe, the vaara kriti of Dikshithar in a very soothing pace. It was very interesting and enjoyable to listen to detailed koraippu swarams. *Raga Ratna malikache* was beautifully rendered with detailed neraval and swarams. The caution with which the sahitya 'bhagavatha uthamulu' was handled during neraval is certainly commendable.

Rendering a kriti alone without any manodharma parts is usually necessary to keep the concert mood up. Yaarendru Raghavanai and Eti yochanalalu, one after the other were still impressive and set the stage up for the main item, Meenakshi me mudam dehi. the kriti was rendered in a grand manner with elaborate swarams.

Udupi Srijith was very good in accompanying on the violin. His elaboration for each of the ragams were clearly appropriate and he gave fitting replies. Akshay Ram provided able support in embellishing the entire concert experience. Vishnu Kammath added apt support on the kanjira. They shared an elaborate tani that was much enjoyable.

A well-set team presented a very impressive concert which featured all rakthi ragams. Very enjoyable afternoon concert that would linger in the minds of rasikas for a long time.



Srividhya Vasudevan, a disciple of vidwan Papanasam Ashok Ramani, delivered an engaging performance with Pappu Gyandev on the violin and Thirucherai Kaushik on the mridangam. Their harmonious collaboration gently drew in the audience into their presentation.

The lecture-demonstration on session 'Sangeetha kutcheri paddhati' shed light on the pivotal roles and contributions of each of the performers of a concert in the success of a performance as a whole. Senior vidwans Nagai R. Muralidharan, Delhi P. Sundararajan, and Mannargudi A. Easwaran shared their insights and experiences, enriching the audience's understanding of concert dynamics. Their expert perspectives provided a deeper appreciation of the intricate artistry involved in a successful kutcheri by all the musicians on the stage.



Udayalur Kalyanarama Bhagavathar's namasankeerthanam filled the air with divine melodies, creating an atmosphere of spiritual bliss. The team's soulful rendition left the audience in a state of serene devotion, truly capturing the essence of bhakti.



S. Shashank's flute concert, accompanied by L. Ramakrishnan on the violin and N. C. Bharadwaj on the mridangam, was a delightful experience, enriched with innovative segments. Their harmonious interplay and musical creativity kept the audience thoroughly engaged. The performance was a testament to their exceptional talent and synergy.

RTP in Kokilapriya, a TVG special



Groomed in both the major systems of Indian music, Carnatic and Hindustani, which is indeed a rare phenomenon, TV Gopalakrishnan (TVG) is a top-ranking vocalist of today. He has also groomed and mentored many disciples both in vocal and in instruments.

Beginning with a varnam (Saveri), he followed it with 'Vandisuvudadiyal' (Purandaradasa, Nattai). Four compositions of Thyagaraja followed. 'Nee Daya Radha' (Vasanthha Bhairavi), 'Dinamani Vamsa' (Hari Kambodhi), 'Mrudhu Bashana' (Maruva Dhanyasi) and 'Saraseeruha Nayane' (Amruthavarshini). TVG explained a few aspects of Maruva Dhanyasi, a Janya raga of Karaharapiya, in which no other kriti is known. Thyagaraja is believed to have created it. The Thyagaraja kriti in Amritavarshini sports the name of the raga, a feature not generally seen in his kritis.

The high point of this concert was the Ragam Thanam Pallavi (RTP) in Kokilapriya, in which 'Dasarathe' (Thyagaraja) is popular. The pallavi's lyrics were 'Bale Sangitha Kokilapriya



Susile Balarkakoti Prabhava', were TVG's own. He said that he sang this pallavi in the December festival (Music Academy, 1966) where Palghat Mani Iyer received the Sangita Kalanidhi title. The speciality of this RTP is the name of the tala in which it has been composed, Kokilapriya, with 24 aksharams, which is part of the scheme of 120 Desi talas. The accompanists, Varadarajan (violin), Trichy Harikumar (mridangam) and V Suresh (ghatam), collaborated splendidly to produce an eminently memorable RTP, testifying to what a multi-faceted genius TVG is.

The 'tani' was absolutely mesmerizing, showcasing talents of the highest order. The two percussionists handled this complex tala with unbelievable ease. S Varadarajan did excellent justice to the learning he has received from his guru, TVG himself. One of the tail pieces was an attractive tillana (TVG) in Ratipati Priya.

At 92, TVG's voice behaved unbelievably well and he was able to come out with amazing brigas and attractive swara korvais. TVG's concert was a great treat to the ears of the discerning connoisseurs who generally never fail to attend his concerts.

Kanya, thy name is variety and creativity



Avasara Kanyakumari gave a violin solo, with support coming from her deputy, Shiva Teja. The laya duo was the admirable Anantha R Krishnan (mridangam) and the indefatigable Dr. V Suresh (Ghatam). Those on stage delighted a considerably well-sized audience with a variety of songs drawn from all composers, including Kanya's own creative numbers.

This concert under the aegis of our Sabha was held at Madras Sanskrit College premises at Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Krupa Hall, becoming

part of the Samskrithi Utsav, this year's December Music Festival.

The beginning was with Sri Ganesha Charanam (Tilang). What followed was the never-say-die Mokshamu (Saramathi) known for its emotional appeal which is a Tyagaraja gem of the highest order. Then came Annamacharya's Sriman Narayana.

The highlight was an RTP that had only swaras in the place of lyrics, more like a mallari, extending to two avarthanas and played in three (kalams) speeds. It could be called a 'swarajathi' of sorts. It had ragamalika choices of ragas Sahana, Kapi

and the one and only Sankarabaranam.

The laya vidwans seemed to be in sync with the 'pallavi' piece and it became almost like a continuous garland when they played their heart out during the thani that followed. In their thani no stone was left unturned and some laya devotees who had occupied the front rows had many moments of exultation.

The post-thani was a thukkada bundle, with Eppa Varuvaro, Muddhugare, Saranam Bhava, and Parulanna Mata contained in them. In between there was a number of Annamacharya in Raga Trisakthi (akin to Sivasakthi). This is a raga that takes its janya from Chakkaravakkam and forms one element in the raga-group, Sapthagiri (Kanyakumari's own again). The song played was Kalasapuram.

One word about Shiva Teja the violin 'accompanist' - He learns the Khanjira and the mridangam too, and is an ardent disciple of Kanyakumari. We are certain to see more of him.



The magic of the whole (team)

MEDHA CHODAVARAPU

The morning of 16th December 2024 dawned bright and sunny over the skies of Chennai heralding the month of Marghazhi. The first concert at the venerated Parthasarathy Swami Sabha was by the stellar team of Kruthi Vittal(vocal), Vittal Rangan (violin), NC Bharadwaj (mridangam) and S Krishna (Ghatam).

Kruthi broke into the lilting Behag varnam by Sri TR Subramaniam with her powerful yet pliable voice while the embellishments by the accompanying artists made the sprightly varnam come alive making everyone sway. A fitting start to what was to unfold over the next two hours. She followed it up a delightful Kharaharapriya – ‘Rama Ni Samanamevarura’ with an apt neraval at ‘paluku palukulaku theneloluku’ in her honeyed (‘thene’) voice. The swara banter between the couple (Kruthi & Vittal) with violin leading the voice for a change was endearing and brought smiles to



many a face. ‘Brihadambikayai’ in the evergreen Vasantha was presented in an innovative way with swaras alternating at Brihadambikayai in the low Sa and contrastingly Brihadeesha in the high Sa.

Following this, ‘Sangeetha gnanamu’, a short RTP in Bilahari uplifted by Vittal’s magical fiddling, the special thaniavarthanam which showed why NC Bharadwaj is regarded so highly amongst the young in musical community and the wizardry Krishnacan do with a ghatam sent the audience into raptures. Rounding this

off were ‘Nambikkol Shivane’ ragamalika and the heart filling ‘Tum Bin More’ Meera Bhajan. This high energy concert closed on a high with a foot-tapping thillana.

The concert saw many moments of oohs, aahs and applause for each of the artists individually and as a whole. The selection and presentation of the songs were well curated and appealing to all in the audience – young and old alike. This soul pleasing concert by the new age stars heralds a bright future for Carnatic music.

Sisters in Harmony: Aishwarya and Saundarya’s convincing concert

SHARADHA VENKAT

Both sisters commenced their concert with Gurusmaranam in typical MS Amma’s baani followed by *Sarasuda varnam* in Saveri ragam. This Adi tala varnam was sung in madyama kalam, in tistra nadai and in duritha kalam is truly to be appreciated and they sung with ease.

The soft and subtle *Maakelara vicharamu* in Ravichandrika, as the sahityam explains, was sung without any *vicharam*. A brief raga alapanai in Nasikabhushani and *Maaravairi ramani manjubhashini* was a delight. Then they

choose *Bruhadeeshwareem bhajare chita* in Lalitapanchamam by Dikshitar. This shadava sampoorana vakra ragam was handled briskly by sisters after two melodies. The handfolding anjali mudra while singing composers mudras similar MS amma’s practice, is very emotional and to be lauded.

They took up Shankarabharanam as the main number. Aishwarya sang a detailed raga alapanai. Was she conserving her energy for singing this elaborate raga alapanai? In-depth and

detailed Shankarabharanam flared up with alluring Ahshaya linga vibho. Neat niraval in the line *Badharivana moola nayika sahita* and compact kalpana swarams were cherished by the audience.

Even though both sisters were influenced by the weather, smiling sibling Saundarya was comfortable under her sisters wings.

Madhan Mohan on violin supported meticulously and his melody filled the hall. Burra Sriram on mridangam navigated ardently throughout as Venkatasubramaniam on ghatam was hardly heard but for the thani avaradhanam. Misra chaapu thala thani avaradhanam was very well delivered by both percussion artists.

Thulasidas bhajan *Srirama chandra krupalu bhajamana* and *Maithreem bhajatha* endorsed that the sisters in full flow are MS Amma’s descendants. Overall, a composed yet convincing concert.



124 and gaining in strength as the years pass on


S SIVAKUMAR

As with the practice prevailing over the years, Sri Ranganatha Yatheendra Mahadesikan (the 46th Azhagiyasinger) of Ahobila Mutt, graced the occasion to inaugurate and confer the awards at Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha's 124th December Music Festival, 2024, at Vidya Bharathi kalyana Mandapam on 14th December 2024. He was given the customary and traditional welcome. Prayer was rendered by vidushi Nityasree Mahadevan's daughters - Tejashree and Tanujashree, and the Kuthuvilakku was lit by the illustrious personalities on stage, including Dr. Nandini Azad, President, Indian Cooperative Network for Women and Working Women's Forum India.

Addressing the gathering Sri Nalli Kuppusami Chetty, the President of the Sabha welcomed the audience and said this Sabha was one with the richest of traditions. The Secretary of the Sabha, Sri Krishnamurthy then announced the various awards to the top vidwans present on the stage.

After giving away various awards, Swamiji in his speech to a packed auditorium stressed that unless the benign blessings of God Almighty reaches you, you may not make much headway in music. There also exists a long-lasting relationship between the Vedas and Sangeetham; they are inseparable. Further talking of his relationship with Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha, he recalled that 10 years back he was here, when vidwan Umayalpuram Sivaraman was given the Sangita Kalasarathy award. He also remarked that he was associated with Carnatic music since the age of and hence his familiarity with many artistes!

By giving such awards like these, for the chosen, not only the vidwans became proud recipients but the sabha enhanced its own reputation, he added. He also told us about the letter written by vidwan Trichur V Ramachandran, an awardee, seeking his blessings and also made special mention of Sunil Gargyan who was head over heels in music even at this age. After hearing Trichur V Ramachandran sing a verse from Narayaneeyam, Swamiji expressed the opinion that internalisation of the sahitya and the bhava associated with a composition would only make the singing more authentic. He also remarked



that vinayam (modesty) has to come about within you as you sing.

Continuing, Swamiji narrated an interesting story about the nodding of heads in appreciation at a concert. Once a king had assumed that all those who had "nodded" their heads were appreciative of music. His minister intervened and contested, saying that this could be a grave error and pat came a new law promulgated to test this aspect among citizens. Head shakers without real appreciation of music, if they nod their heads would be beheaded, said the law. Obviously there were no headshakes on the next day, save that of a lone ranger. He was summoned before the king and his answer was a head that does not appreciate music, there is no difference, whether it exists or not.

Last year's Sangita Kalasarathy vidwan Nagai Muralidharan, felicitated the awardees. Vidwan Srimushnam Raja Rao, a Sangita Kalasarathy now, is more than a mridanga vidwan, a formally qualified vocalist, a composer, an organiser, known for his participation at Cleveland and for being at the helm at the Thyagaraja Aradhana festival at Thiruvayyaru. He had been instrumental in the finding and forming of disciples who also became team members that assist him in organising the many vizhas. He said that vidushi Rukmini Ramani, without riding on the reputation of the incomparable Papanasam Sivan, being his daughter, had formed her own compositions and ones that had to be reckoned with for their innate merit. Her many pancharathna krithis and compositions in rare ragas speak for themselves. Palghat Mani Iyer Centenary award winner Trichur Narendran's Guru Bhakthi (he learnt from Palghat Raghu) is exemplary and there is no vidwan whom he has not

played for. No sign of flamboyance in Narendran's playing, Nagai Muralidharan observed. Of TKV Ramanujacharyulu, the recipient of Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu award, Muralidharan recalled his working with him at AIR Tiruchi for several years. He too hails from the richest of traditions (parampara). He also made an appropriate remark here, that the sabha had chosen all awardees who hailed from the historically long-standing paramparas and duly complimented it.

Coming to D Balakrishna, the vainika who gets Veenai Pichumani Centenary award, Muralidharan said the moment you hear of him you will recall always his illustrious father Veenai Doraisamy Iyengar, a tradition-bound vidwan who was able to produce the subtle gamakas on the veena without the pick-up mic. Ghatam Karthik gets the Gottuvadyam Narayana Iyengar award for Musical Excellence. He is known for his 'Heartbeat' which has now completed 25 years now. He also holds his Ph.D. in Sanskrit and can sing remarkably well.

You name the youngsters performing today and all of them would have passed through 'Issai Mazhalai' Ramjhi. Fittingly Ramjhi is recognised by bestowing on him the G Ramanathan award.

Two youngsters chosen by the sabha are Sunil Gargyan and Kamalakiran Vinjamuri for the Dr. M L V award. Established and much-sought after performers already in their respective fields, the award indicates to them, ever so kindly, that they should not rest on their oars and they have still miles to go on and on.

Cleveland V V Sundaram quoted important anecdotes in the lives of each

Continued on next page

Prince Rama Varma's enthralling and entertaining evening melody

SHARADA VENKAT

Evening's curtain was raised with a glimpse of Kedaram and an outpour of Navaragamalika varnam in two kalams. Winding up the varnam with Shree Ragam was totally flattering.

Gajananayutam in Vegavahaini was a variety presentation with the swaraksharams in Ga Na Di Sa Nnu Tha Pa Da Pa Dma Ka Ra M and Singing the chittaswaram in three octaves modulating a roaring voice while reaching the mandra sthayi shadjam and ascending back proved it was a vegamana (swift)vahini!

Versatility of a vocalist reflects on the pakka vadyam. This was proved with all the three vidwans on the dias. While Vinu on the violin was receiving and reflecting, Harikumar and Karthick were singing along through their instruments. One could wonder how can percussion instruments sing! It is an experience by itself to enjoy the instruments singing.

The 20th century composer Pallavur Mani Iyer's *Neela megha shyamala* in Karnataka Behag (as explained by Prince) with elaborate swarams emphasizing on jeeva swarams was a delight to the rasikas.

Cream of Keeravani was next and established with 'humkaram'. Ascending and descending with Arokanam and Avaroganam syllable by syllable, eases every single rasika to understand, admire



and imbibe the raga. Vinu was equal and effective to reproduce all the variations with vigour.

Swati Thirunal's *Bhavaye Saarasa Nabham* emphasised on every possible swaraksharams, which is again his uniqueness in presenting such phrases. He was soaked in the Sahithyam that made the audience visualise a divine presence in front of them. While he brought Perumal to our auditorium, the team started stringing a garland with the kalpana swarams. Such was the experience. The Rishaba prasthabham was a feast for the learners and awestruck the audience.

Thani Avarthanam - while both Harikumar and Karthick complimented each other throughout the concert, an exemplary thani with modulated Mridangam and Karthick's konnakkol was mesmerising.

After this energizing Thani, came Pedda Thirumalachar's *Ekkadi Manusha Jenmam* in Bouli followed by *Thumbam nergayil* in Desh, *Srirama nee namamu* and *Kuntalavarali thillana* composed by vidwan M. Balamuralikrishna. The variations in anu pallavi reminded fire crackers all around for the curtain closure.

This concert had yet another unique feature. CAR - Create A Rasika, an initiative by musicians Nithyashree Mahadevan and K.N. Shashikiran to create an interest and awareness of Carnatic music among the students. Prince Rama Varma motivated a group of students present in the concert, to sing along. Though it was focused on youngsters, everyone got involved in it with positive vibrations.

Continued from previous page

124 and gaining in strength as the years pass on

one of the awardees and wished the sabha well. While many would agree that arguably this is the oldest sabha in Madras, he on the other hand, would go to the extent of saying it was the oldest in Asia.

All awardees who were able to speak (for want of time, two kutcheri's were listed and would come soon) showered their encomiums on Sabha's Secretary Krishnamurthy, his team and K N Sashikiran for their unstinted effort and creative ideas that they have implemented. They with their team of committee members had functioned in a fine manner to bring this sabha to this status.



Top: Adyar Brothers - J. Venkatesh and J. Bala Subramani playing nadaswaram with Adyar D. Senthil Kumar and Ekarpalayam Sri. E. V. Ganapathi on the thavil
Bottom: Chinnamanur A. Vijay Karthikeyan & Idumbavanam V. Prakash Ilaiyaraja on nadaswaram, along with Guru Thanjavur T.R.Govindarajan and Idumbavanam K.Manikandan on thavil

When Strings Conversed


NEHA MURTHY

What defines a jugalbandi? Is it merely two musicians sharing a stage, or is it a deeper interplay of art forms, where individuality merges seamlessly with collaboration? The Chitravina-Violin jugalbandi concert presented by two eminent vidwans *Chitravina* N Ravikiran and Mysore Manjunath, accompanied by another senior vidwan Srimushnam Raja Rao (mridangam) and B S Purushotham (kanjira), at Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha was a fine display of this delicate balance. It celebrated the improvisational depth of Carnatic music and the artistes' ability to shine as soloists and in a cohesive ensemble.

The concert opened with Oottukadu Venkata Kavi's *Bhajanamrata* in Nattai, set to Adi tala. This piece, somewhat akin to *Endaro mahanubhavulu* in sentiment and compositional structure, paid homage to the spiritual legacy of Alwars, Nayanmars, philosophers like Ramanujacharya, and great composers like Purandara Dasa and Tulasidas—luminaries whose devotional contributions have shaped the *bhakti* tradition across centuries. It also encapsulated Venkata Kavi's brilliant signature style, blending lyrical depth with rhythmic vibrancy, and set the tone for the evening.

The second offering, Tyagaraja's *Brochevarevare* in Sriranjani, featured an electrifying exchange of swarams. The seamless conversation between chitravina and violin brought out the essence of the raga while showcasing the vibrant energy that defines a jugalbandi.

Varali, rendered through Dikshitar's *Mamava Meenakshi* in Mishra Chapu tala, exemplified pure camaraderie and genuine



spontaneity. The mastery of the artists over the Carnatic idiom and their chosen instruments was evident as they decided on the spot what to play, playfully taking up challenges during the kalpanaswaram segment with transitions from Mishram to Tishram. From Ravikiran's unique bass touches enhancing Manjunath's alapana to Manjunath seamlessly completing Ravikiran's phrases, their minds seemed to align effortlessly. The alapana and neraval featured sublime, shruti-aligned interplay, with Raja Rao's deft mridangam accompaniment and Purushotham's kanjira enriching the performance's rhythmic vitality.

The evening's repertoire also featured Tyagaraja's *Anathudanu Ganu* in Jingla. This was followed by Shyama Shastri's timeless piece *Sarajadalanetri* in the majestic Shankarabharanam, which provides the canvas for expansive creativity. The raga alapana, shared between Ravikiran and Manjunath, allowed each artist to present their unique artistry while maintaining the raga's integrity. Ravikiran took a brief minute to talk about the role of music as a method for enhancing wellness, emphasizing the importance of audience participation in the tani avartanam, which followed this piece. Raja Rao and Purushotham engaged in an enthralling rhythmic dialogue, demonstrating how the structural intricacies of tala contribute to Carnatic music's therapeutic resonance. The concept of rhythm as a tool for wellness

or musopathy, an evolving area of study, was palpable, as their percussion invited both introspection and exhilaration.

The concluding segment included *Asai mugam marandu poche* in Jonpuri and the English Note of Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavata. The latter, presented as an audience request, was a delightful fusion of Western harmonic elements with Carnatic sensibilities, reminding rasikas of the global exchange of ideas that has enriched Indian classical music for centuries.

What made this concert remarkable was not just the individual brilliance of the artists but their ability to uphold the spirit of jugalbandi. Unlike conventional accompaniment, where the violin follows the lead of the chitravina as these very two artists have presented before, here the two instruments alternated as equals, taking turns to lead and shadow. Their mutual appreciation and synergy underscored a shared vision of elevating the art form.

As rasikas, we expect to witness this harmony—a transcendent interplay that touches the soul. Last night, the quartet delivered exactly that: a wholesome concert reminding us why jugalbandis are cherished in Indian classical music. They are not just performances but dialogues—a meeting of minds and a celebration of musical oneness.

Neha Murthy, a student of Carnatic music for the past 15 plus years, is a promising performer today, who is also interested in the history, socio-cultural contexts and theoretical aspects of Carnatic music. She has organized many events through Swara, an org she founded as a student at Emory University in Atlanta, besides writing academic papers and articles on Carnatic music.



email: sangeethasarathy@gmail.com

Editorial Team

S Sivakumar | R Revathi

Writers

R Bharathwaj | Dr. Chandrika Rajaram
Medha Chodavarapu | V. Mohan
Neha Murthy | Rajagopalan Venkatraman
Sharadha Venkat | Sundararaman Chintamani

Layout & Design

Fairy M

Photos

Lingan Studios Shankar



Krupaa Lakshmi and Barghav Hariharan presented a neat concert on the inaugural day of the Samskriti series of our sabha at The Madras Sanskrit College's auditorium. Their captivating vocals were enhanced by Pappu Gyandev's violin and the impressive double mridangam of Aduthurai Guruprasad and Aravind Kaushik setting the tone for the series, showcasing a harmonious blend of talent and artistry.