



SRI PARTHASARATHY SWAMI SABHA

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Special Nagaswaram Concert for a Grand Start to the 125th Year of Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha

RAJAGOPALAN VENKATRAMAN

On the 2nd morning of the new year 2025, the divine vibrations of Nagaswaram and Thavil blended seamlessly, creating a soul-stirring experience for the gathered audience as our Sabha majestically strode into its 125th year. Featuring the globetrotting nagaswaram maestro Yazhpanam Nallur Balamurugan, the concert was a resounding testament to the depth and grandeur of Carnatic music, setting a high bar for the year ahead.

Vidwan Balamurugan, ably supported by his son vidwan Sarangan, breathed life into the ragas, presenting them with an unmatched vibrancy and profound devotion. The dynamic thavil duo's rhythmic precision elevated the experience, providing an exhilarating rhythmic backbone to the concert.

The carefully chosen selection of kritis included "Engu nAn selvEn ayyA" in DvijAvaniti by Periyasaamy Thooran. The kriti was delivered with fitting bhakti bhavam to bring out the poignant longing and pleading of the composer to Lord Siva.

The 25-minute alapana in Natakapriya stood as a pinnacle of the concert, a masterful exploration of the raga's expansive



emotional and melodic dimensions. As the artistes delved into every crevice of this sampoorana raga, the listeners were carried along in a tide of emotions—from the serene to the intense, from blissful tranquility to fervent devotion. The rendition of the Thanjavur Sankara Iyer kriti "glta vAdya naTana" brought out the full grandeur of the raga and the lyrics hailing the divine attributes of 'nAda swarUpini mAtangi.' It was not just an exercise in technical mastery but a spiritual odyssey, stirring the hearts of the rasikas, a performance that will resonate in their memories for years to come.

In their captivating tani avartanam, tavil vidwans P.S. Senthilnathan and K.S.P. Venthusan displayed mastery over rhythm

with seamless laya patterns, complex korvais and delicate interplay of koraippus. This heightened the vibrant energy of the performance. A sublime 'bhAvayAmi gOpAla bAlam' in YamunA kalyAni rounded up the concert.

The artistes were felicitated by the Sabha's Secretary M Krishnamurthy and 'Cleveland' Sundaram. The momentous occasion of our Sabha entering its 125th year with a sublime nagaswaram concert was highlighted and considered auspicious by both the dignitaries. The rasikas could not get enough of this one-of-a-kind listening experience at the dawn of the new year. In all, it was a fantastic start to 2025 setting the tone and anticipation for the musically enriching year ahead.



Nithyasree Mahadevan's concert is a regular feature on New Year's Day evening at Sri Parthasarathy Swamy Sabha. She presented a kutcheri rooted in tradition, supported by Lavanya Sundararaman. Her years of experience shone through in the performance. Accompanied by Raghavendra Rao on violin, I. Sivakumar on mridangam, and Rajaraman on ghatam, the concert was a beautiful tribute to sampradayam.

Subhadra exhibited clarity and brilliant laya sense RAJAGOPALAN VENKATRAMAN



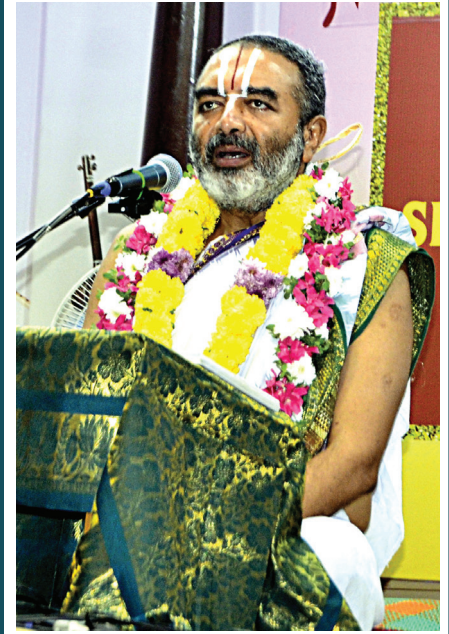
Subhadra Sridharan's concert was marked by her clarity of diction and expressive rendition, which captivated the audience from start to finish. She opened the concert with a traditional varnam, 'sAmi ninnE kOri' in Sri, composed by Karur Devudu Iyer, which set a serene yet energetic tone for the afternoon. This was followed by Tyagaraja's 'RaghupatE rAkshsa bhImA' in Sahana, where Subhadra's emotive rendition beautifully captured the essence of the kriti.

Next was a crisp Hindolam alapana that preceded the rendition of Dikshitar's 'nIraJAkshi kAmAkshi nIrada cikurE', showcasing Subhadra's ability to evoke deep emotion through her voice and phrasing. An energetic rendering of 'bhOgIndra ShAyinam' in KuntalavarALi, composed by Swati TirunAL upped the tempo of the concert.

The main raga of the afternoon, Sāveri, was rendered with nuance and

depth in her rendition of Dikshitar's 'SriRajagopala'. The performance of trikāla neraval at 'dhIrAgragaNya dIna sharaNya' was particularly noteworthy, demonstrating Subhadra's command over rhythm and melody. The swara passages were crisp and precise, and her control over laya was noteworthy. The violin accompaniment by Visesh Uppoor and the mridangam support from Srikar Chitari contributed to a seamless ensemble that enhanced Subhadra's vocal expression. Srikar's brisk tani showcased his mettle.

The concert also featured a soulful viruttam followed by 'ManadhiRkugandathu Murugan rUpam' in Sindhu Bhairavi, before concluding with a vibrant tillana in Darbari Kanada, which served as a fitting finale. Throughout, Subhadra was ably supported by her talented accompanists, with the young trio leaving a lasting impression on the audience with their artistry and synergy.



Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha continued its cherished tradition by beginning the new year with Velukkudi U Ve Krishnan Swamigal's upanyasam on 'Srinivasa Kalyanam'. He presented this timeless grandeur of the divine wedding of Perumal and Thayar to a full house. The upanyasam was a spiritual experience for the attendees on the morning of the New Year.

Raghavasimhan S, who created waves by innovating a robot violinist capable of playing Carnatic music, presented a lecture demonstration on 'Technology in Music: A Travel through Time'. He is a doctoral student in music technology at Georgia Tech in Atlanta, USA. The lecture and the passionate demonstration was an eye-opener to many students as well as music rasikas to know the endless possibilities of technology in the art of classical music.



A soulful ensemble by Quartet

SHARADHA VENKAT

The Quartet delivered an extraordinary instrumental music, showcasing individual brilliance and seamless collaboration. The ensemble featured the violinist Shreya Devnath, mridangist Praveen Sparsh, nadaswaram Vidwan Mayilai Karthikeyan, and the tavil artist Gummidipoondi Jeeva. Together, they celebrated the beauty of Carnatic music, leaving the audience's spirits uplifted long after the concert concluded.

Vidya Bharati Hall was packed with an appreciative audience that resonated with the quartet's musical vibrations. They commenced their concert majestically with a Mallari in Gambhira Nattai, instantly captivating the rasikas. This was followed by Mysore Vasudevacharya's 'Bhajana Seya Radha' in Dharmavati, introduced with an elaborate alapana by both Shreya and Karthikeyan. Thyagaraja's timeless 'Manavalyalakinchara' in Nalinakanti was equally enchanting, with Karthikeyan delivering commanding high notes in 'Gani Manava.'

The quartet's excellent rapport was evident throughout the concert, blending individual expertise with group dynamics to create a harmonious experience.

Their rendition of the RTP (Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi) in Karaharapriya, composed by vidwan R.K. Shriramkumar- 'Harapriya Graja Shrikrishna' in Khanda Jati Triputa Talam, was a highlight. The ragam's melodious versatility provided a perfect canvas for intricate improvisation. The duo incorporated Mohanakalyani, Mohanam, Sriranjani, Desh, Bowli and Sindu Bhairavi while establishing the kalpana swaram.



Shreya, with her electric violin calibrated to match the frequency of the nadaswaram, paired effortlessly with Karthikeyan, delivering a remarkable alapana. Their mutual understanding, swift transitions, and innovative improvisations were spectacular.

Shreya's mastery of taanam and her janta prayogams stood out, holding the audience in rapt attention. The pallavi was followed by an energetic Tani Avartanam, where Praveen Sparsh and Jeeva displayed their rhythmic prowess, lifting the concert to another level.

The program concluded with Dikshitar's 'Rama Janardana Ravana Mardana' in Shankarabharanam. The crisp Nottuswaram earned them a standing ovation.

The Carnatic Quartet's concert was a feast for the eyes, ears, and soul that proved that instrumental music, when performed with such passion and precision, can transcend boundaries and touch the deepest chords of the heart.

Vidwan Ashwath Narayanan with his soar-to-the-sky-and-yet-be-sweet voice, the ever and anon, vidwan L Ramakrishnan whose sounds on the violin are as professional as ever, with the glowing and blowing pair of on the laya-front, vidwan Delhi Sairam (mridangam) and vidwan Anirudh Athreya (Khanjira), proved their mettle in their concert. Bilahari and 'Sri Chamudeswari palayamam' spoke for their whole presentation. A concert one shouldn't have missed!



Aptly named Hearbeat, after the first rhythm of life, Vidwan Ghatam Karthik, in the company of his son Vidwan Sarvesh Karthik and Vidwan V G Vigneshwar on the keyboard presented his thoughts and experiences on "Creative influences and Inspiration" in a pay-full-attention-please Lecture Demonstration, which was as engaging as informative. The listeners had a good time!

Rasas find Ragas - K Gayathri in full bloom

K Gayathri has now been gathering under the wings of the other Suguna (Vidushi Suguna Varadachari). She had picked up Suguna Varadachari's idea of identifying ragas for rasas at one of Suguna's concerts. Inspired by the idea, Gayatri gave "a special" at our sabha. She at first formed a rasa-garland, and then with the raga names themselves as a kind of sahitya, sang them in order. She then crowned it with Sama (Shantham). The Sama krithi 'Shanthamuleka' was then sung, most appropriately. The ragas for the rasas were: Shringaram (Khamas), Veeram (Kannada), Karunyam (Sahana), Adbutham (Khambodhi), Hasyam (Kunthalaavarali), Hayam /or/ Hayavahe (Mukhari), Raudram (Atana), Bhibatsam (YadukulaKhambodhi) and finally Shantham (Sama).

Her concert seemed briskness personified as it commenced with the Kannada varnam. Jayajaya Padmanabha (Manirangu, Swathi Thirunal) followed on its heels. Sri Dakshinamurthe was the main in Sankarabaranam, a Dikshithar masterpiece. It got the treatment it deserved in terms of raga, neraval and



kalpanaswarams. None of these were populist in either form or content. They were being made over to us with due veneration for the song, the raga. Gayatri showed her researcher bent of mind by including an uruppadi (உருப்படி) in Jayanthasena, "Sridhara Pahi Dayakara" of Mysore Vasudevachar, a piece accepted as a rare one.

The thukkada suite, had 'Irakkam Varamal Ponathenna Karanam' of Gopalakrishna Bharathi and a Thillana which had the ragas Vasanthi, Hamsanandhi and Madhuvanathi, (mami's composition) and were presented in the

ascending and reverse order too.

Violinist B Ananthakrishnan, understood and played according to the art of a shrewd accompanist's attitude. His full cooperation for "rasa-raga" was more than explicit and later for Sankarabaranam, he brightened to show his colours with a sense of panache.

J Vaidyanathan (mridangam), Sunil Kumar (Khanjira) gave a performance not showy, but on song-based relevance. The two filled the gaps occurring in song lines with a keen sahitya sense.

Ramya Kiranmayi, supported by Saketha Pantula on violin, Karun Salvady on mridangam, and Sathya Ganesan on ghatam, delivered a serene afternoon concert. A student of Vidushi Dr. Pantula Rama and Vidwan Sri MSN Murthy, Ramya's performance was marked by rich, flowing music, devoid of any showiness, allowing the depth of her renditions to shine through.



"Mitru Bhagyam," a Harikatha by B. Suchithra, explored the theme of friendship in the Puranas, skillfully relating these ancient examples to modern-day bonds. Her lively presentation was enriched with beautiful renditions of various composers' works. Karaikal Venkata Subramanian on violin and M.S. Venkata Subramaniam on mridangam provided excellent support, enhancing the overall experience.

Following the kutcheri paddhathi

R BHARATHWAJ

One of the prominent aspects of a concert is what is presented. The “how it is presented” is the next thing. Our stalwarts of yesteryears have made an impact with some ragams and compositions and when a young artist chooses to present some of these compositions, it is much easier to connect with the rasikas.

Shankarabaranam with ‘Akshaya linga vibho’ is one such choice. Gayathri Mani presented a classy Shankarabaranam. Her Alapanai was developed in a standard fashion and with much leisure and sowkya. Vishal Sowmyan’s raga essay was good. This grand composition was presented in a gripping manner with elaborate neraval and swarams at ‘badari vana moola nayika sahita’. Sannath Parameswaran on the mridangam provided very sensitive accompaniment playing with good anticipation. His tani was good as well.



Earlier in the concert, Gayathri presented Thyagaraja’s ‘Gnanamosa rada’ and Swati Thirunal’s ‘Mamava sada janani’. The elaborations in Poorvikalyani were also presented well. The concert ended with ‘Sharadhe karunanidhe’ in Hamir kalyani, a composition of the Sringeri Sankaracharya.

Gayathri chose to perform along the known and established pathway. Her renditions and presentation were neat. She chose to not indulge in any experimentation or try any gimmicks, thus delivering a good classical concert which was also enjoyable.

Nithyasree Mahadevan’s Journey Through the Maya of Mayamalavagowla

SIVAPRIYA KRISHNAN

Nithyasree presented a lecture on Mayamalavagowla, the 15th mela in the 72 Mela Karta scheme of Govinda.

Indhalam is the Tamil Pann raga equivalent to Mayamalavagowla. Back then, it was considered to be a morning raga even in the South Indian system of music, though now we do not practice that anymore. The equivalent in Hindustani is Bhairav and is a morning raga in their system even now, as they follow that practice. There is a sloka by Venkatamakhi which says ‘poorno Malavagowlaakhyahasakho gaayatesadhaa’.

The scale of the raga is Sampoorana with shuddha rishaba, antara gandhara, shuddha madhyama, shuddha dhaivata, kakali nishada. The Madhyama is flat, and the Gandhara is also sung flat. However, there can be a ‘push or nokku’ from the gandhara to the madhyama while singing, she said. This raga is taught in the primer lesson in the Carnatic system. She said that singing flat notes and also shhuda rishaba, antara gandhara, shuddha dhaivata develops a lot of vocal skills



and maybe this was the reason for using this raga for the primer lessons. It has a perfect poorvanga and uttaranga as it a complete seven scale raga.

There are two varnams by Swati Tirunal and Papanasam Sivan, but many kritis by other composers. ‘Deva deva kalyani’ by Swati Tirunal, ‘Adi Kondar’ by Muthu Thandavar, ‘Mayateetha’ by Ponniah, ‘Chintayeham’ by Mysore Vasudevachar, a kriti by Harikesanallur, a special eduppu kriti ‘Devadi deva’ by Sadasiva Rao, ‘Intha parakka’ by Anai Vaidyantha Iyer are some well-known songs. Tyagaraja

has a bouquet of kritis, viz. ‘Tulasidala mula che,’ ‘Meru samaana,’ ‘Vidulakumrokkeda,’ Dikshitar’s first krithi and also in the series of the Gurguha vibhakti kritis in Mayamalavagowla, ‘Srinathadi Guruguho Jayati Jayati,’ just mirrors the raga in the avaroha swaras. There is a phrase ‘Mayamalavagowladidesa’ in the

Dikshitar kriti and this refers to the gowla desa, the regions where the rudraksha beads grow, she informed.

Bhimsen Joshi’s ‘Karuniso ranga Karuniso’ in this raga is a very popular song. There are folk songs in this tune sung in the villages and a Tirupugazh, ‘Agra mudalena’ in this raga. There are several janya ragas from this mother raga which are popular like Paras, Gowlipantu and so on. Nithyasree’s lecture was a fund of information to the uninitiated, describing the vast landscape of this raga.

Grand Musical Farewell to 2024 by Neyveli Santhangopalan


SHARADHA VENKAT

On the eve of the New Year, Parthasarathy Swami Sabha hosted an educative concert featuring four legendary “Acharyas” with over five decades of dedication to music. Neyveli Santhangopalan (Vocal), Nagai Muralidharan (Violin), Mannargudi Easwaran (Mridangam), and Thripunithura N. Radhakrishnan (Ghatam) took the stage together, offering rasikas a great moment to cherish. As the saying goes, “இத்தருணம் விட்டால் இனித் தருணம் வாய்ப்பது அறிது,” every rasika in the auditorium was ready to capture the enriching takeaways.

Neyveli Santhangopalan’s music stands as a testament to classicism, Bhakti, and Bhava. As a musicologist and Vainika, his performances delve deep into the essence of ragas. His training under illustrious gurus and years of dedication were evident in his holistic concert, which featured Vasantha Varnam, Garudadhwani, Jayanta Sena, Kalyani, Varunapriya, Nattakurinji, Tillana, and திருப்புகழ்.

பளிங்கு நீர் சுனையில் இருந்து சீராக நீர் கொட்டுவது போல பாடல்கள் பாடினார். முதலில் வந்தது வசந்தா வர்ணம்.

The interplay of kalpanaswaras between the vocalist and violinist offered glimpses of brilliance.

Thyagaraja’s ‘Ananda Sagaram’ in Garudadhwani, with its exploratory prelude, brought alive the phrase “சங்கீத சாகரத்தில் மூழ்காவிட்டல் பிறப்பிற்கே



அர்த்தம் இல்லை”. The swaras resembled waves, beautifully complemented by the cushioning rhythm of the percussion. Thyagaraja’s ‘Vinata suta vahana’ in Jayantasena was dedicated to mridangam Eswaran by Santhanagopalan.

The Kalyani raga alapana was a highlight, demonstrating raga lakshana through akaraams, syllables, and swarams. Santhangopalan and Muralidharan matched each other’s artistry, weaving colourful phrases and concluding the alapana in Taanam pattern. Thyagaraja’s ‘Nidhichala Sukhama’ stood out with its swaraksharam brilliance - da sa ra ti / da ma sa ma ma nu —and niraval at ‘Damasama manu ganga snanam sukhama.’ One had to immerse themselves to experience its profundity, akin to ‘Ganga Snanam.’ The diving of in and out of ganga was experienced through the swarams in ascending arohanam (diving out) and descending avarohanam (diving in) pattern. Brilliant!

Vidwans Easwaran and Radhakrishnan brought the rhythmic element alive with a thrilling TANI. Easwaran, embodying

Nandhi Devar himself, delivered a captivating performance.

The seamless transition to the RTP began with the Varunapriya kriti ‘Emani Pogadudura’ yet another gem of Thyagaraja and culminated in the melodious Nattakurinji and the Pallavi, நல்ல சமயமிது அடி, மாணே தன்னை அறியத் தானே தானே ஆக - (self-introspection theme).

After an extensive alapana they presented a structured Tanam spanning three octaves in three kaalams -a true takeaway moment!

Hamsanandhi Tillana and Arunagirinathar’s திருப்புகழ் மதியால் வித்தகனாகி sung in three kalams, marked a majestic end.

“சங்கீத ஞானமு பக்தி வினா “ --This concert left the audience inspired, filling hearts with devotion and takeaways. Acharya Devo Bhava!!

As the concert concluded, Bhajan Sandhya continued. One could not imagine a better way to bid farewell to 2024 and welcome 2025.

The very popular P. Unnikrishnan was brilliantly supported by the seasoned talents of R.K. Shriramkumar on violin, Tiruvurur Bhakthavathsalam on mridangam, and A.S. Shanker on ghatam. Their cohesive performance reached its pinnacle with the tranquil rendition of ‘Inta paraka’, performed in a leisurely choka kalam, which left the audience in a state of serene bliss.



O S Arun's Bhajan Sandhya – Transporting audiences

S SIVAKUMAR

O S Arun's Bhajan Sandhya in a word transported everyone, both believers and non-believers alike, to an imaginary world, where they were hand-in-hand with Krishna. And the medium, O S Arun.

As there was no fixed format, he had made a medley of Krishna songs and regaled the audience with his 'mangandeya' like voice. Be it the 14th Ashtapathi (there are in fact 24 in all) or Ramalinga Vallalars 'Petra Thai Thanai Maga Maranthalam,' the voice was at its mellifluous best. His singing

also had many "punctuations" and then the softer and a bit louder notes occasionally, but suitably (வல்லினம், மெல்லினம், ஏற்றங்களும், இறக்கங்களும்) and also those meaningful gaps to sink in the meanings of those lovely poetry, into our psyche. In the 14th Ashtapadhi mentioned above it was a Sa Madhuripuna, a kind of smile with shyness (lajja, Hindi), where Radha imagines the scenes these sakis (other girls friends, தோழிகள்) have gone through.

The stage itself was full, full enough, with B Ananthakrishnan on the violin, Vijay Ganesh on the mridangam, Martin on the Tabla, Venkataraman on the harmonium and Selvam on the thalam. And willingly acknowledging their presence, Arun offered individual playing-slots to the harmonium player and the violinist, where the respective players contributed with an air of confidence. They too appeared to be free. Of course, mridangam and thalam was a constant.

By the way this particular verse, 'Petra thai thanai,' was continued to the very end as in (reproduce here):

இன்னும் பற்பல நாளிருந்தும், இக்கணத்தனிலே இறந்தாலும்
துன்னும் வான்கதியே புகுந்தாலும், சோர்ந்து மாநகரத்துமுன்றாலும்,
என்னமேலும் இங்கு எனக்கு எது வந்தாலும், எம்பிரான் எனக்கு யாது செய்தாலும்
நன்னர் நெஞ்சம் நாடி நின்றோங்கும், நமச்சிவாயத்தை நான் மறவேனே!

Normally singers who sing this verse (பா) as a virutham, and for some inexplicable reason, don't seem to utter these lines.

What is of utmost importance here in this Arun's Bhajan Sandhya (Sandhya means sing along), was the sense of participation Arun could "unearth" from the innermost recesses of each one's mind in the audience. Intermittent welcome applauses became the unwritten rule here! After the Viruttam on Namasivayam, if you had some more longing, it was 'Irakkam Varamal Ponathenna Karanam' (இரக்கம் வராமல் போனதென்ன காரணம்). At the end, I couldn't avoid those moist eyes, looking at mine!

N J Nandini - Voice and aesthetics soars and scores

S SIVAKUMAR

N J Nandini (NJN) popular with rasikas of all ages on account of the many musical shorts she presents on social media, gave two memorable portrayals, raga alapanas, of Shanmukhapriya and Bilahari. As a daring gesture she took up Bilahari as her main.

While giving it to us, NJN displayed a high level of all-round proficiency. She seems to have assimilated the music from her gurus. There was a deep understanding of the raga, beautifully capturing its exact mood of joyousness, thoroughly expressive in her phrasing and ornamentation. Bilahari's top notes and their lovely groupings, adukkus, came with an effort, no doubt, but it was success right away! And was it by coincidence that the alapana indicated the song that was to come, Mysore Vasudeachar's Sri Chamundeswari Palayamam? Here and for Shanmukhapriya (Harikesanallur Muthaiah Bhagavathar, song, Valli Nayaga Neeve Gathiani) that came earlier, the improvisations were not only captivating



but the melodic lines stayed true to the essence of the respective ragas.

NJN put before us a padam, 'Panimathi Mukhi Bale' by Swathi Thirunal in Ahiri. And you kept wondering! Raga for the lyrics or lyrics for the raga! And sensuousness was taken to its peak; Nandini's rendering style and voice making no less a contribution!

Worth mentioning here was the handling of Takka (Raka Sasivadana, Tyagaraja). The way in which the line "sasi vadana" landed/finished on the top shadjam with a graceful bend, one can

write pages about it. (உண்மை, வெறும் புகழ்ச்சி இல்லை!)

Sruthi Sarathy (violin) put in her best, enriching the aesthetics with some stately alapanas that kept close to the main artists' picturization.

Akshay Ananthapadmanabhan (mridangam) and Sunil Kumar (Khanjira) seemed to visualize the ragas and the songs first in their minds and then played accordingly. Their thani had patterns of playing with a give and take to guide them and korvais and kuraippus were on the dot.

Fun, with the undercurrent of seriousness - Anil Srinivasan (Piano) & U Rajesh (Mandolin)

Anil Srinivasan on the Piano and U Rajesh on the mandolin, always in high-spirits captured the total attention of the rasikas by their merited performances on these two differently styled instruments. As the concert progressed Anil explained how Rajesh, together with the one and only mandolin maestro U Srinivas, who became the little master of this little instrument, combined with Ghatam's synonym Vikku Vinayakaram and his other family members, made Anil's instrument concert-worthy, with regard to Carnatic music.

Yes. They were really "having fun" playing here and trusted the audience are also taking their part in this. True to his words every now and then Anil came up with interesting anecdotes, like coffee versus Bournvita bargains and more such. But when it came to performance on their instruments they were downright serious. Their concert had these songs lined up, in the form of Gajananayutham, Manasa Sancharare, Entha Mudhdho, Vandanam, Krishna Nee Begane and the loftiest of them all, a thanam in Kapi as a preface to ChinnanChiru Kiliye and closely after that Thamarai Pootha Tadagamadi. All songs after suggestive alapanas came at a soothing even pace, no strain either to the instruments or to the rasikas either. Kannaththil Muthamittal (கன்னத்தில் முத்தமிட்டால்) had sangatis too, and why not, the instrumentalists showing they must have compulsorily sung it during their practice sessions. That is the



very purpose of all practice sessions. At raga alapana sessions here (and what had you thought!) Rajesh put in his utmost with conventional gamakas and some quicksilver brigas in tune with the mood of the song and the raga contemplated. For his part Anil on the piano, chipped in with his single notes or group of notes and came up thus with the ragas contour. ஆகக் குறையொன்றுமே இல்லை மறைமூர்த்தி கண்ணா!

The laya front had Praveen Narayanan on the Tabla and Swaminathan Selvaganesh on the Khanjira. The fine nuanced strokes of the tabla combined well with the booming phrases of the khanjira. In fact at the beginning Selvaganesh indulged in Konnakkol exercises, which aroused the curiosity from a couple of Japanese, who were among the audience. The same Japanese pair was shrewd enough to realize and point out, how this concert had a healthy mix of both the conventional and the modern.

So...Please do have fun!

KVN guides Pattabirama Pandit all the way

Pattabirama Pandit, who was one of the foremost disciples of Sri K V Narayanasami (KVN), showed how much he has assimilated from his Aasan, as he gave a performance at our sabha. His choice of 'Naajivadhara' in Bilaharai, which stood out as his main, speaks volumes about whom except KVN should be the guiding force in his choice, though not physically present, here and now. What was special about Pattabiram was the order in which the fine sangati's came and the assured laya support for all these that featured in the form of Bangalore Praveen (mridangam) and Balaji Chandran (Ghatam), giving their inputs. These kinds of mature laya vidwans actually give shape to many concerts.

One was deeply impressed by the kind of breath control Pattabiram exercised while singing, especially for the Hindolam, the song being 'Manusloni' of Tyagaraja. It seemed that has become habitual for him.

Talking on similar lines one noted the constructive role the violinist played in this concert. TKV Ramanujacharyulu (TKV) matched phrase by phrase and pattern by pattern, with that of the vocalist, both during the alapanas and kalpana swara segments.



TKV was our sabhas award winner this year, 2024 winning the Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu award.

Later Pattabiram gave us two Kannada songs, 'Narajanma Bandhage' and 'Ramam Bhaje Samam' and the Thillana 'Niri niri gama gari sa' in Purvi popularised by KVN, a composition of Tirukkokaranam Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar.

As the final 'Bagyadah lakshmi baramma,' which invites the Devi to one's abode, came about. Its special feature being all the stanzas were sung faithfully.

Taking the lead during the thani, Praveen teamed well with Balaji and these two pushed all their might to bring up, with ample glow, the various laya combinations one could think of. They executed them to perfection.

What a concert, Sid Sriram!

RENGARAJAN KRISH



For the number of urupadis Sid Sriram presented in the two-and-a-half-hour concert, he scores a full centum. For the energy he maintained from start to finish, he gets another set of full marks!

The Sahana varnam that began in a slow tempo was only a sure and strong step to move into a high-voltage performance gradually.

A special mention must be made on the RTP in Kanada in Khanda jati Triputa with the lyrics 'Srirama jayarama jaya jaya rama.' Quick rhythmic variations with the mridangam vidwan J Vaidyanathan adding embellishments along with Anirudh Atheya was a delight to watch. Preceding the pallavi, Kanada alapana came in all colours with the violinist HN Baskar's intuitive following.

Earlier Dikshitar's Kalyani Navavaranam 'Kamalambam Bhajare' was a peaceful rendition that gave way to a brilliant

tani avartanam by the percussionists. The tight filler was Papanasam Sivan's 'Nambi kettavar evarayya' in Hindolam.

'Intha Paraka ni' in Nadanamakriya by Anai-Ayya and the beautiful 'Appan avatharitha' of Papanasam Sivan in Kharaharapriya received an energetic treatment at the hands of Sid Sriram. The sedate 'Ennalurake' in Subha pantuvarali rendered soulfully, touching the upper octaves with all clarity followed by Mysore Vasudevachar's 'Bhajare re manasa' in Abheri was completely contrasting to each other. A rapid 'Guha saravana bhava' in Simhendra madhyamam signalled a leisurely number following. A hard-core old-timer may not be in full agreement with Sid's style, but he knows exactly what the audience looks forward to in his concerts and makes use of every little moment to bring in the 'awe' factor! The entire concert was a joy to watch, to say the least.

Sid Sriram presented a garland of post-tani pieces - start counting: a fast-paced 'Janaki ramana' (Kapi), the ever-youthful 'Eppo varuvu' (Jonpuri), the electrifying 'English Note,' a wonderful 'Karpagame' (Madhyamavati) - if this line-up reminds you of Madurai Mani Iyer, you are right, but all these songs had a totally different feel on the listeners! Yet another popular and heart-touching composition 'Enna kavi paadinalum' (Neelamani) came by and while the audiences were settling for drawing the curtains, Sid began 'Rangapura vihara' in Brindavana Saranga and brought the packed hall at Vidya Bharathi to a thunderous applause.

'Keyboard' Sathyanarayanan (Sathya), who has a proud mentorship under the stalwarts Mandolin U Srinivas, Dr. M Balamuralikrishna, and A Kanyakumari, delivered an impeccable performance. He skillfully showcased intricate gamakams and sustained long phrases on the keyboard, an impressive feat for the Western instrument. M. Sriramy on violin, Arjun Ganesh on mridangam, and S. Sunil Kumar on kanjira provided excellent support, enhancing the performance.



Sangeetha Swaminathan, accompanied by B. Ananthakrishnan on violin, Nellai Balaji on mridangam, and Sowmiya Narayanan on ghatam, delivered a captivating performance at the Samskriti Series held at Madras Sanskrit College. Sangeetha mentored by the illustrious vidushi Sudha Ragunathan, presented a lively concert and the ensemble's harmonious collaboration resonated deeply with the audience.

Reviving Forgotten Gems in Carnatic Music

Vocalist V. Sankarnarayanan, who travels from Singapore to perform in Chennai, transported the audience to another era by reviving long-forgotten compositions. Trained in Carnatic music from a young age, he was raised in a musically rich environment. His father, N. V. Subramanian, is a renowned concert organizer and a senior violinist.

Sankarnarayanan's main offering was an elaborate rendition of Thyagaraja's grand kriti, 'Etavunara nilakada niku,' in Kalyani. Comparable to a gourmet feast, the performance included all the ingredients that listeners sought. He presented an expansive alapana, exploring Kalyani's myriad contours and beautifying this queen among the Prati Madyama ragas. 'Etavunara' offers tremendous scope for manodharma, which Sankarnarayanan delivered generously, singing niraval and swaras at the charanam line 'Shrikarudagu Tyagaraja Kararcita Shiva Madhava Brahmadulayanda.'

In the sub-main category, the kriti chosen before the Kalyani piece was 'Devadi Deva Sri Vasudeva' in Sunadavinodhini. This raga, created by Mysore Vasudevachar by dropping the swaras Ri and Pa from Kalyani, was the only other raga besides Kalyani chosen for Alapana. Some rasikas might have preferred a different flavour, like a Suddha Madyama raga, instead of



Sunadavinodhini. However, this does not detract from the perfection and beauty with which 'Devadi Deva' was rendered, capped with kalpana swaras.

Sankarnarayanan sprang some surprise by starting the concert with 'Bhavayami Raguramam,' a kriti that was immensely popular a few decades ago, especially after M.S. Subbulakshmi's famous recording. This gem of a composition has rarely been heard in recent years, raising the question of whether it had been forgotten. It was also unconventional to begin a concert with a ragamalika. Despite these unusual choices, his brisk and captivating rendition, including kalpana swaras at 'Vilachita Pattabishekam' in the final charanam, as though the bundles of chittaswaras in the ragamalika were not enough, kept the audience's interest high.

Another kriti that evoked a nostalgic flavour was Syama Sastri's moving 'Brovavamma' in Manji. 'Chetasri

Balakrishnam' by Dikshitar, rendered with grandeur in a slow tempo, and the fast-paced 'Sadananda Thandavam' by Achutadasar in Bahudari, both favourites of Madurai Mani Iyer, were highlights of the pre-main session. The concert concluded with 'Sarvam Brahmamayam' by Sadasiva Brahmendrar and Papanasam Sivan's catchy piece 'Kanak Sabaiyai Kandapin' in Kapi.

The vocalist had the generous support of R. Raghul, a student of violin maestro M. Chandrasekaran, who showcased his talent, especially in Kalyani. The 'sawaal-jawaab' swara prastharas between him and the vocalist were a delight. Poongulam Subramaniam, trained by Srimushnam Raja Rao, and Kanchira artist Trivandrum Rajagopal, provided sterling percussion support. The thani avarthanam following 'Etavunara' testified to the high standards of percussion which these two artists can boast of.

SANGEETH SARATHY ONLINE



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Haasini Bhattiprolu, supported by M. Siva Teja on violin and Puttur Nikshith on mridangam, gave a heartfelt performance for the Samskriti series at Madras Sanskrit College. She comes from the USA and in this concert, her sincere passion for Carnatic music was evident, as she connected deeply with the audience through her expressive rendition.

Rajhesh Vaidhya's Rhapsody

SHARADHA VENKAT

Rajhesh Vaidhya's Veena concert commenced with prayers and he delivered a masterful performance comprising over a dozen classical pieces interspersed with film melodies, leaving the audience spell-bound.

The concert began with the Navaragamalika varnam, where he navigated Purvanga in two kalams, transitioned into uttaranga in durita-gati, and progressed into ati-durita-gati. This was followed by a lively jam session featuring E.V. Ramakrishna Bhagavathar's 'Vinayaka ninnu' in Hamsadhwani and Thyagaraja's 'Nee daya rada' in Vasantha Bhairavi. The energy peaked with a delightful and rapid rendition of Thyagaraja's 'Entanerchina' in Udayaravichandrika. What a display of speed and precision!

Rajhesh's rendition of Thyagaraja's Sri raga Pancha ratnam, 'Endaro mahanubhavulu,' showcased his impeccable fingering techniques adding depth to the sahitya bhava.

Rajhesh was ably supported by Mohana Raman on the Mridangam, Swaminathan Selva Ganesh on the kanjira, Praveen Narayanan on the tabla, and Bharath Damodaran on the keyboard. Their synergy enriched the concert, creating a harmonious and energetic ensemble.

A standout moment was Rajesh's performance of Amrutavarshini, dedicated to his guru, Chitti Babu. He highlighted the raga's beauty interweaving it with Ilayaraja's "தூங்காத கண்கள் ரெண்டு,"



and 'Sudhamayee' by Muthaiya Bhagavathar.

Rajesh's personal favourite, 'Raghu vamsa sudha' by Patnam Subramanya Iyer in கதன குதாகலம் was brought to life through the special கத்திரி மீட்டு and high-energy RAP-style Chitta Swaram adding a contemporary edge. Taking audience's suggestions, he performed Ragam, Tanam, and Kritis in Abheri. His innovative reverse-playing technique, where he pushed the strings instead of pulling them, was a visual and auditory treat that enhanced the raga's beauty.

During the elaboration of Abheri, Rajhesh included "சிங்காரவேலனே தேவா" delivering a vibrant Tanam. The rendition of Thyagaraja's "Nagumomu Ganale", a delight for the rasikas, culminated in an electrifying Tani Avartanam, with Mohanaraman and Praveen Narayanan showcasing their rhythmic finesse. Swaminathan Selvaganesha brought his unique flair, starting his turn with a Vandana or Viruttam in Konnakol, a tradition inspired by his grandfather. His sloka on

Kanchi Mahan added a spiritual dimension to the concert.

The concert concluded with a series of crowd-pleasing pieces: "Pibare Rama Rasam," Chitti Babu's iconic "குயில்பாட்டு in Maand and a medley of Tamil film songs, spanning from G. Ramanathan to A.R. Rahman, such as மாசிலா நிலவே, ஒரு நாள் போதுமா, அஞ்சலி அஞ்சலி புஷ்பாஞ்சலி, all tied together with Kuyil-inspired tunes. The grand finale featured soulful renditions of "Kurai Ondrum Illai," "Brahmam Okkate," and Guru Smaranam - ஜய ஜய சங்கரா! ஹர ஹர சங்கரா!

As Thyagaraja proclaimed in 'Mokshamu galada,' in the line 'Veena Vadana Loludau' - the divine melody of the Veena remains eternal. The Sabha's 124th-year celebrations concluded on this celestial note, marking the beginning of its 125th YEAR with Veena Ganam very similar to this year. The enchanting music lingers on, leaving a promise of more cherished moments in the years to come.

Rithvik Raja's vocal performance was beautifully complemented by Parur M.S. Ananthakrishnan and Rajeev Mukundan on violins, alongside V Anirudh Athreya on kanjira and G Chandrasekara Sharma on ghatam. The unique ensemble, with its double violin arrangement and absence of mridangam, brought a fresh perspective to the concert. The slow-paced renditions perfectly suited the serene morning atmosphere and the wonderful tani avartanam needs a mention too.



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Bhaja Govinda Pravaham


R BHARATHWAJ

'Sant Pravah' was a unique presentation focusing on the many saints of India. At the outset, it was mentioned that the prime focus of the program was the compositions of the many bhakti saints of India, thus setting the tone for their presentation. Vasudha Ravi and Savita Sreeram took turns to give the comments for their presentation. Starting with Adi Shankara's Bhaja govindam, they sang a few lines from Manikkavasakar's Siva puranam as a virutham in ragamalika, taking turns and followed it up with Thirugnana Sammandhar's first tevaram 'Thodudaiya seviyan' in nattai with many rounds of svarams. Sant Tukaram's composition 'Guru dhyayi' emphasizing the importance of a Guru was next presented.

Vasudha and Savita then shared a detailed alapanai of Mukhari and Karaikal Venkatasubramanian gave a classy response. Kalyana Ashtapadi 'Priye charu sheele' from Jayadeva's Geeta Govindam was presented with its slokam and many rounds of svarams. The importance of this ashtapadi and the history of the relationship of Jayadeva and Padmavathy and their bhakti towards Lord Krishna was explained in detail.



The next was a Meera Bhajan. The bhakti of Meera Bhai towards Krishna was explained and the prominent women amongst bhakti saints, Meera Bai, Andal and Akka Mahadevi were mentioned. For all the compositions presented, there was a nama bhajan part as well. SV Ramani on the mridangam and Vazhapally Krishnakumar on the ghatam played with an electrifying effect throughout the entire program.

Madhyamavati alapanai for the main item was expansive and presented with sruti bedham. Thyagaraja's 'Rama katha sudha' was sung with neraval and swarams at 'karma bandha jvalanabdhinavame'. The swara exchange also involved graha bedam, eventually culminating in a koraippu where Vasudha

sang Hindolam, Savitha sang Mohanam and Venkatasubramanian played Suddha saveri and coming back to Madhyamavati leading to a korvai involving all the raagams and a finale. This intellectual exercise was rather neatly presented. A scintillating tani avarthanam followed.

The duo then presented an abhang of Sant Chokamela followed by Surdas bhajan 'Gopi gopala bala' to conclude their presentation. This unique concept on various saints and their bhakti compositions was well received with many rasikas joining in the beats and clapping with the rhythm. It was a unique blend of a concert and pravachanam and nama sankeerthanam that was novel in many ways.



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**When celebrity musicians had a chat with the rasikas over coffee -
A few snapshots!**

