

SRUTI BOX - 395

Sangita Kalanidhi

Chitravina N. Ravikiran is the new Sangita Kalanidhi designate of the Music Academy this year, and it is real music to ears. Ravikiran hails from a family steeped in quality music, having inherited the genes of his father Chitravina Narasimhan, and his late grandfather Gottuvadyam Narayana Iyengar—thus keeping the tradition intact. It is a deserving honour for the innovative and always cheerful Ravikiran who cares for both old and new techniques in music.

Ravikiran was a child prodigy able to identify ragas even when just two years old, when he was quizzed by Carnatic greats like Semmangudi and Flute Mali. Unlike some prodigies Ravi never looked back and put his stamp on many aspects of Carnatic music.

Ravikiran is also a prolific writer on music. As a Madurai Mani fan, I enjoyed his fine article in the *Deccan Chronicle* on the evergreen Mani Iyer entitled *Bradmanesque Music*. Congratulations to Chitravina Ravikiran!

*S. Venugopalan
Chennai*

Neyveli Santhanagopalan

I have read with great interest the comprehensive and lucidly written two-part article by S. Janaki on Guru Neyveli Santhanagopalan, published in two recent issues of *Sruti*.

The article clearly brings out the multifaceted musical genius of NSG. He is a complete artist—as complete as a human can be, with the aid of modern technology. Indeed he is a role model for the current and future generations of students, teachers, musicians, composers and music promoters.

Thanks to *Sruti* for bringing out the less known aspects of a well known musician who has a single minded devotion to advance the cause of Indian music.

*P.P. Kanthan
Chennai*

R. Visweswaran

I listened to Prof. Visweswaran for the first time at the annual festival of the famous Anjaneya Temple at Nanganallur, Chennai, around fifteen years ago. As a veena practitioner, I was longing to see and listen to the mahavidwan, and his veena concert turned out to be a great experience.

The venue was in the precincts of the temple (opposite the Venugopalaswami sannidhi) and devotees doing the pradakshinam could listen to his music as they walked past the stage. I remember that this 'floating audience' started settling down to listen as they could not afford to miss the brief yet valuable information he gave alongside the recital. He told us about the speciality of his instrument with a *vyali* facing upwards, He took up alapana of Saraswati raga to describe how it is related to the goddess of vidya and rendered his own composition, singing the sahitya as he played the veena, and explained the meaning. I observed that the audience swelled to a never before strength for any veena concert.

When he took up the delineation of Dhenuka, the manner in which he started the alapana, covering the entire arohana and more with a single pluck of the instrument, is still fresh in my memory. There was spontaneous applause from the rasikas when Visweswaran began *Teliyaleru Ramabhaktimarga*—befitting the venue and the occasion. Perhaps many, including me, got to understand the meaning in detail of the Tyagaraja composition only that day! I felt humbled when I was introduced to the great vidwan as the local manager of the bank branch which was a sponsor of the celebrations. I received his blessings. The kutcheri was a landmark event. I am surprised that Chennaiites are not getting to hear his concerts in the metropolis.

The interview with the nadopasaka, by K. Srilatha published in *Sruti*, has thrown immense light not only on the art of veena but music in general, the trinity and the spiritual aspects of music.

S. Sivaramakrishnan
Chennai

Noise pollution

No discerning music lover can dispute the strong words of N. Subramanian on the disquieting trends in Carnatic music (*Sruti* 393). In fact I would prefer to address the situation as 'noise pollution'. The percussionists drag the mikes as close to their thumping base as possible, as if competing with the vocalists and violinists. Vocalists, on their part, are keen to ensure that their feedback is perfect rather than what the listener feels. They do not seem to understand that the greater the distance between the artists and the mike, the better is the ambience. And as most of the audience is unaware of the effectiveness of a perfect acoustic system, we accept everything as passable. It would not be surprising if contact mikes became a part of percussion instruments in the days to come. It is up to the artists to rectify the noise menace. Rasikas like me can only vent our reactions through mail, but to no avail.

T. Santhanam
by email

Nagercoil Ganesa Iyer

I write to you after reading the articles on "*Musicians of Kerala*" published in *Sruti*. I am the grandson of mridanga vidwan Nagercoil S. Ganesa Iyer (NSG) who performed at the Music Academy and in Chennai sabhas from 1930s to the 1970s. He worked as Senior AIR Artist. The contribution of my ancestors to Carnatic music in Travancore and the Madras Presidency has faded over time. Nagercoil was then part of Kerala, and the 'Nagercoil sangeeta paramparai' was then part of Travancore. As mentioned by H. Viswanatha (son of Nagercoil S. Harihara Iyer) during German evacuation in 1939 they shifted to Chennai on the advise of Carnatic music rasika Parakai P.N. Subramanian, in order to pursue their music. The Nagercoil music

family was then under the patronage of the Travancore Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi.

Ganesa Iyer and his younger brother Harihara Iyer (vocalist and violinist) and elder brother Nagercoil Padmanabha Iyer (harmonium) played in concerts and for katha-kalakshepam discourses. The Nagercoil brothers used to perform at the Navaratri Mandapam festival, and with top notch doyens like Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Musiri Subramania Iyer, Tiger Varadachariar, and Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar. They were also deeply associated with the musician and composer T. Lakshmana Pillai. His Tamil kritis were propagated by Sthanu Bhagavata and his sons in many katha-kalakshepams.

Nagercoil Ganesa Iyer had many disciples in Travancore including his sons, his nephew Suchindram Krishnan, Salvadi, and some members of the royal family.

We request you to publish articles about the 'Nagercoil sangeeta paramparai' and the musicians who belonged to it—Nagercoil Sthanu Bhagavata, S. Padmanabha Iyer, S. Ganesa Iyer, S. Harihara Iyer and Suchindram Krishnan.

*S. Krishnakumar
by email*

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