



Great Lakes Aradhana Committee

presents

Sarovar 2013

*A month-long festival held at venues
all over Southeast Michigan*

April – May, 2013





The Sarovar Team



(Standing left to right): Sivaram Muthusubramaniyan, Sriram Ganapathy, Sankar Krishnan, S. Ramamurthy

(Sitting from left to right) Nagu Lakshmanan, Charu Shankar, Ganga Rajkumar



Dr. Kalyan Ramamurthy



Sarovar 2013 is supported by
the Michigan Council for
Arts and Cultural Affairs
and the Detroit
Recreational Department.





Welcome to the ***Indo-American Festival of Performing Arts - Sarovar 2013!*** It is my pleasure to invite you to participate in a wonderful month of cultural enrichment and fellowship in Southeast Michigan.

The Oakland University Department of Music, Theatre, and Dance is happy to be working with the Great Lakes Aradhana Committee, an exemplary non-profit organization committed to preserving, presenting and promoting Indian art forms in the Metro Detroit area. Through this collaboration, we are offering exciting opportunities for all festival participants.

We are thrilled to host Sarovar on the campus of Oakland University. The term 'Sarovar' is a Sanskrit term for Lake - signifying the Great Lakes. Sarovar will showcase an outstanding line up of highly respected performers who will share their art forms during this month-long series of events. This festival also presents a great opportunity for Oakland University students to explore the rich cultural traditions of India and develop an understanding of Indian music. 'Indo-American Festival of Performing Arts - Sarovar 2013' promises to be a truly unique event with an outstanding line-up featuring traditional vocal and instrumental music as well as fusion music. I am personally excited to be part of Sarovar and am looking forward to seeing you at the festival.

Sincerely,

Mark Stone

Coordinator of World Music

Department of Music, Theatre, and Dance

Oakland University



Welcome



*“What’s behind the Master Mind
of a
Musicologist?”*

Nalini Sadagopan, Pearland, TX

Glad in crisp and colorful *kadhi kurtha*, soaked in blissful musical aura with tinges of sandalwood fragrance floating around him Dr. B.M. Sundaram was awe inspiring even as I got to know him over just a couple of days. Dr. Sundaram was invited as the artistic director for the 36th Tyagaraja *Aradhana/Uthsavam* by the Classical Arts Society of Houston. Sundaram Mama was not only brimming with the musical knowledge which he was eager to share with profoundness, in intricate details and through catchy anecdotal incidences; he was full of energy and enthusiasm for I could have hardly guessed that he was in his late seventies. Riveted to the seat as the festival director for two days in a row with his deep commentaries, and fervor for education, he was free willing to share his life experiences like a flowing river. I had the honor of talking with him over a cup of tea one evening where I was eager to learn about how and what turned him into a musicologist.

When asked “Mama, Can you please share with us about your journey?” he wittily replied “You want me to toot my own horn?”, but then he shared his experiences much with a child-like attitude and in a story telling format. What turned a little boy from Thanjavur, who was a descendant of 40 generations of musician into a musicologist despite his father reprimanding him for even attending concerts? Sri. Sundaram recollected, “My dad wanted me to become an IAS officer, and wanted me to do nothing with music; yet I had such a penchant for music that it drew me very closely”. Dr. Sundaram’s protective mother would encourage him to attend concerts and helped in the conspiracy of even attending a few music lessons – a signature stamp of a mother. When he turned 15 his father passed away and he took to music with no barricades. A turning point in his life was waiting for him one day when he turned on the radio to listen to a voice which mesmerized him so much so that he packed his bags the next day to go meet this musical genius. It was none other than the legendary Sri. M. Balamurali Krishna. He learnt music from Dr. Balamurali Krishna (BMK) who was then the producer at All India Radio traveling from Thanjavur to Madras just on the weekends.

As Dr. BMK moved to Hyderabad, the young Sundaram reluctantly was about to pursue a career at Standard Motors in Salem, when he found himself interested in composing music for cinema and was introduced to the field by the famous actor T.S. Baliah. His quick ability to delineate phrases to *swarams* was a stronghold for him and he worked closely with Music director G.Ramanathan at Modern Theaters in Salem who then moved to Madras. What we all hear from reality music T.V. shows these days that a fundamental training in classical music goes long way to the musicianship as a play back singer or music composer was a no brainer in yester years as is evident from the life of Dr. Sundaram and many other stalwart musicians in the cine field. As the assistant music director for G. Ramanathan he has worked with several musicians and music directors such as Ghantasala, S.Varalakshmi, T.M. Soundarajan, P. Susheela and Viswanathan to name a few. Some of his musical compositions include “*Mounaththil Vilaayadum Manasaakshiye*”; and my favorite “*Kaattru Veliyidai Kannama*”.

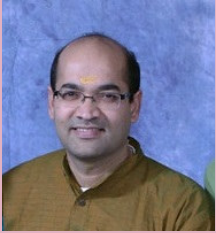
He has also scored background music for many movies. When asked “how did western music influence Tamil cinema movies?”, mama was quick to share that upon introduction to some Rock and Roll music in 1978, director Ramanathan came out with the song “*Yaaradi Nee Mohini?*” for the “*Uthama Puthiran*” which showed that musicians have a keen ear for various music genres and were willing to broadly incorporate the nuances as they saw fit. Dr. Sundaram was of the opinion that as a music director, there is a better flow in music composition when the lyrics are first set than vice versa. Further he continued that although each ragam might help emote a different bhava/mood, a great musician is one who knows how to employ one raga to express various moods. He demonstrated on how the major scale Kalyani has been incorporated to express various moods such as pathos, *shringaram*, happiness etc. Another great movie that he has worked on is “*Ambigapathi*” with gems of compositions such as “*Sindhanai Sei Maname*”; “*Masila Nilave Nam*”.

Where is the twist in the tale again and what brought him his furtherance in classical training and turned him into a researcher/musicologist? His ardent admiration for Dr. Balamurali Krishna moved him to Hyderabad to continue his learning from Dr. BMK who was then the principal for music college. He moved wherever BMK moved practicing the true *gurukulavasam* and served as his personal assistant for several years. During these days Dr. Sundaram composed music for the lyrics of Saint Annamacarya and Badrachala Ramadasar. In the year 1963 Dr. Sundaram returned to his native Thanjavur to raise his family. He is fluent in many languages including Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, and Marathi (growing up in the Maratha land of Thanjavur) which helped his research. He immersed himself at the famous “Saraswathi Mahal” library which is the second largest official library in India. It is home to over 38,000 manuscripts and palm-leaf inscriptions (Olai Chuvadis) on various topics including music, *mantra shastra*, etc. He researched tirelessly not just with books and palm-leaf inscriptions, but also by traveling widely and talking to families of musicians and dancers; his self-motivated attitude to preserve the data gathered from seldom read manuscripts and people resulted in several books. Through his first book “*Palayazhi*” he presented 3,600 raga scales with different ‘*arohana*’ and ‘*avarohana*’. Other books include “*Tala Sangraham*”, which deals with 1,400 *talas* and *Mangala Isai Mannargal*. He was conferred the doctorate degree for his thesis, “*Origin in Evolution of Nadaswaram and Tavil*”. He further was invited to work for the All India Radio in Delhi, Trichy and Pondicherry (where he currently resides). Needless to say he has several feathers on his cap with titles including the *Kalaimamani* award, and the *Kalabharathi* award - presented to him at the Thansen Festival held in Gwalior in 1995 for his “*Biography of Thansen*”. He also serves as a visiting professor of music at a University in Wesleyan-Connecticut and Norton College at Massachusetts. When asked what were the key factors that inspired him to evolve into a musicologist he shared the recipe with ease which can be applied as a recipe for success in any field – “**Dedication, passion and interest**”.



Spotlight Maharaja Swathi Tirunal Rama Varma on his 200th Birth Anniversary — the versatile genius

Sriram Ganapathy, Canton, MI



The year 2013 marks the 200th birth anniversary of one of the greatest sons of Kerala, Maharaja Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma. Born on April 16th, 1813 as the second child of the reigning sovereign, Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bayi and Raja Raja Varma of the Changanacherry Palace, he went on to become the 13th ruler in the Kulasekhara dynasty that ruled over the princely state of Travancore.

The greatness of any nation can be gauged by its cultural legacy rather than its 'world domination' ideals. India in general and Travancore/Kerala in particular has had a rich heritage and a glorious past. Even the greatest emperors of India have been known to renounce violence and emphasize the fact that the pen is indeed mightier than the sword. When the kings of other distant lands boasted on their ability to pillage and plunder, invade and destroy, conquer and convert -- Travancore kings were not only the patrons of fine arts, but were not only composers (Swati Tirunal) and painters (Raja Ravi Varma) themselves, but also sages (Sree Chithira Thirunal) who ruled in his dual capacity as Dasa and Ruler and was considered a Sage among Kings. Nowhere in the world can you find a king who considers himself a slave – a Padmanabha Dasa who rules his kingdom on behalf of the Lord and swears allegiance only to Him!

The period from 1750 to 1850 was the true '*Rama Rajya*' period or the Augustan age (for the anglicized reader) of South India classical music. Swathi Thirunal, Thyagaraja, Dikshitar and Syama Sastri all flourished during this period. Of these famous composers, Swathi Thirunal was unique in the sense that he was not only a great composer; he was also a royal composer. And during the short period of his life, he put Kerala on the cultural map of the world. Swati Tirunal was a true lover of arts. Not only did he compose over 500 songs in almost all the mela karta ragas, in a variety of languages and talas, he was responsible for reviving the Mohini Attam art form and for composing many songs especially for this art form.

As a musician, almost every one of his compositions is embellished by the choice of the most mellifluous words, infused with sweetest musical quality. They were all inspired outpourings of his reverent *bhakti* or devotion and he was a true 'Padmanabha Dasa' in the sense that his mudra was the name of the Lord himself. In Valmiki's Ramayana, Rama describes pure devotion can be expressed in nine ways - '*navavidha bhakti*'. Swati Tirunal Maharaja is considered as the foremost among the composers of *Navavidhabkathi Kritis*. The Royal composer combined in his style the elegance of Thyagaraja's with the grandeur of Muthuswamy Dikshitar's and single handedly led the Renaissance in music in Kerala. The devotional songs of classical excellence which he composed in different languages embodied his sublime sentiments embellished in a simple language and turned to melodious music – all masterpieces which constitute



a royal treatment given from a maharaja given to a paamaran served in a silver platter. The Maharaja's compositions are immortal because not only do we see Padmanabha in them, we hear and feel Padmanabha when listening to them.

Now, let us talk about Swathi Thirunal's prodigy in languages. He was made a prince at the tender age of sixteen. Being a prince did not mean that he possessed miraculous powers to acquire proficiency in a spectrum of languages spoken in India. He not only learnt these languages from scratch, but later, could compose several complex kritis in them. Imagine that in today's SE Michigan, where we find it hard to make our teenager respond back to us in our native language! Apart from his profound Sanskritic erudition and apart from his scholarship in his own home tongue Malayalam, he also mastered Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and went beyond the barriers of geography and acquired proficiency in Marathi, Oriya, Bengali and English. He not only composed in Carnatic music, but also ventured out and composed in Hindustani music as well. This example which he set is a model lesson in achieving the ideal of National Integration in India that the culture and heritage of India are one. It does not matter in what language one expresses it.

Another interesting fact is the difference which is mostly overlooked by the outside world to fully comprehend the range of his genius and his achievements. He was a king and a patron of arts first and composing music was not his 'day job' nor did he have a 'shishya parampara' like the other great names in music. Any great musician or composer needs a lineage of pupils popularize their renderings and to continue their traditions after their lifetime to acquire reputation. In most cases, after the composers death, their sishyas popularized the masters' songs, gave them wide publicity, so much so that they soon became part of the mainstream of the Carnatic tradition. But Swathi Thirunal lived and died in Travancore, that too at a young age as a king with his all while taking care of his princely duties and supporting a good many of the musicians who adorned his court and the many distinguished visitors who flocked to see him recognized his genius and had the measure of his greatness.

In spite of not having formal 'shishya parampara', Maharaja Swathi Thirunal would be elated that his most eminent shishya today is none other than Prince Rama Varma, direct descendent of HH Maharaja Swathi Thirunal and Raja Ravi Varma. He is the organizer of the Swathi Sangeethotsavam, a week long music festival featuring exclusively the compositions of Swathi Thirunal. This unique musical event is conducted every year in January at his palace – the Majestic Kuthiramalika palace built by Maharaja Swathi Thirunal himself adjoining the Sreepadmanabhaswami Temple in Thiruvananthapuram.

Swathi Thirunal's span of life was short. He passed away at the very young age of 34. It is astonishing that he was able to learn half a dozen languages and compose more than half a thousand memorable pieces of music. This was done within the time available after performing his duties as a ruler.

Music is the finest means of expressing man's most sincere sentiments. And these can sustain only on the foundations of culture. India has had many rajahs and maharajahs. But there is and will be only one Maharajah who was a musician among kings and a king among musicians!



*A romantic evening
with an unexpected
love affair with
Reethigowlai*



Swathy Vasudevan, Novi, MI

It was a pleasant spring evening in May 2011. The evening began for me with a very elaborate **Lathangi**. This was my first time with Shashank. I truly didn't know what to expect but there was a romantic excitement in the air. The air became sweeter with every improvisation and I was beginning to feel the romance around. It was the beginning of the trance for me. The Lathangi ended gracefully and I leaned forward as if to ask, "what is next?". Before I realized it, the transition to **Reethigowlai**

happened. I sighed and shrunk down a little deeper in my seat. (Reethigowlai had never been my most favorite ragams until this love affair

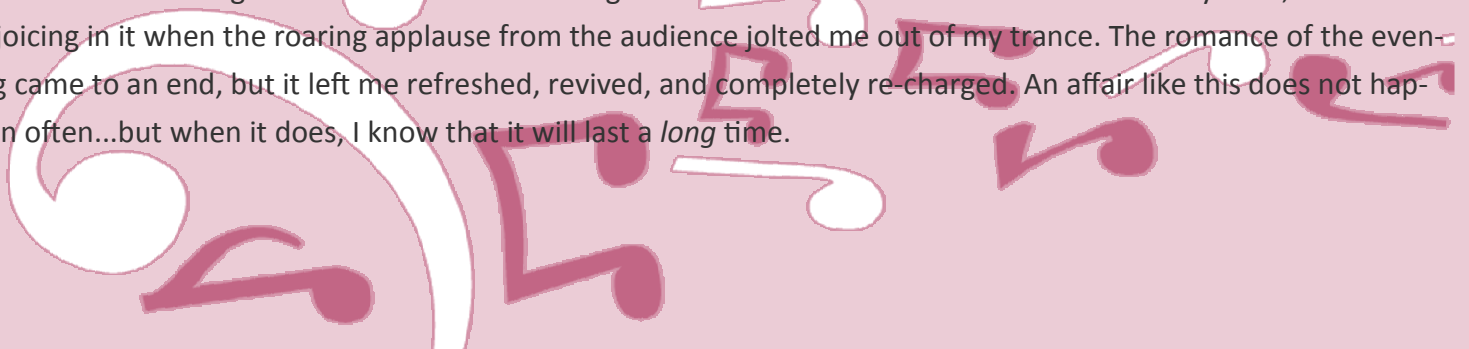
happened). As Shashank progressed into Reethigowlai, with every note, I felt as if Reethigowlai was pleading for my love. The charanam made the affair even stronger. By the time he got to the final "*Janani Ninnu Vinnaa*" I was head over heels in love with Reethi Gowlai — an affair that will not end any time soon. The romance in the air continued on with Shashank's intoxicating flavor of **Kaapi**. I felt like I was swayed in a huge "jhula" and the breeze brought a strong aroma of Kaapi each time. Kaapi has lovers of every age — some love the strong Kaapi, some like it light, some like it with flavorings (think Mishra Kaapi).

Shashank brewed his flavor of pure Kaapi for more than 30 minutes and it brought everyone onto their feet — literally !!! It was the best shot, I've ever had; who does not love Kaapi!

After that I also got to enjoy quick sips of **Keeravani, Abheri, Behaag, Mohanam, Hindolam, Saramathi**.

The bonding with the evening got stronger with "*Narayanathe Namu Namu*" in **Behaag** which is very close to my heart. When the evening was so filled with romance, can you imagine what raag **Maand** could do? "*Chinnan Chiru Kiliye*" came next. It pierced through my heart — it was now bleeding love!

Mesmerized by the melodious flute music, I shut my eyes and lo I saw how Shashank painted a beautiful motif with the melodious **Sindhu Bhairavi**. It almost brought tears to my eyes and totally melted my heart. The finale of the romantic evening was a Thillana in scintillating **Kundalavarali**. The trance seemed so real by then, and I was rejoicing in it when the roaring applause from the audience jolted me out of my trance. The romance of the evening came to an end, but it left me refreshed, revived, and completely re-charged. An affair like this does not happen often...but when it does, I know that it will last a *long* time.



One of the most distinctive treasures in Carnatic Music today is an ancient instrument called the Chitravina. Not only is it a very rare instrument, but it also has a unique history. The Chitravina is a 21-stringed, fretless instrument, which is played similar to the Hindustani Vichitraveena.

The Chitravina

Chitra Lakshumanan, Novi, MI

Although the Chitravina looks like the Veena, it differs in the playing technique.

The instrument is played with six main melody strings. Like the Veena, it contains three drone strings. However, one aspect unique to the Chitravina is that it has sympathetic strings under the main strings. These are tuned to a specific scale and are usually used for improvisations in concerts.

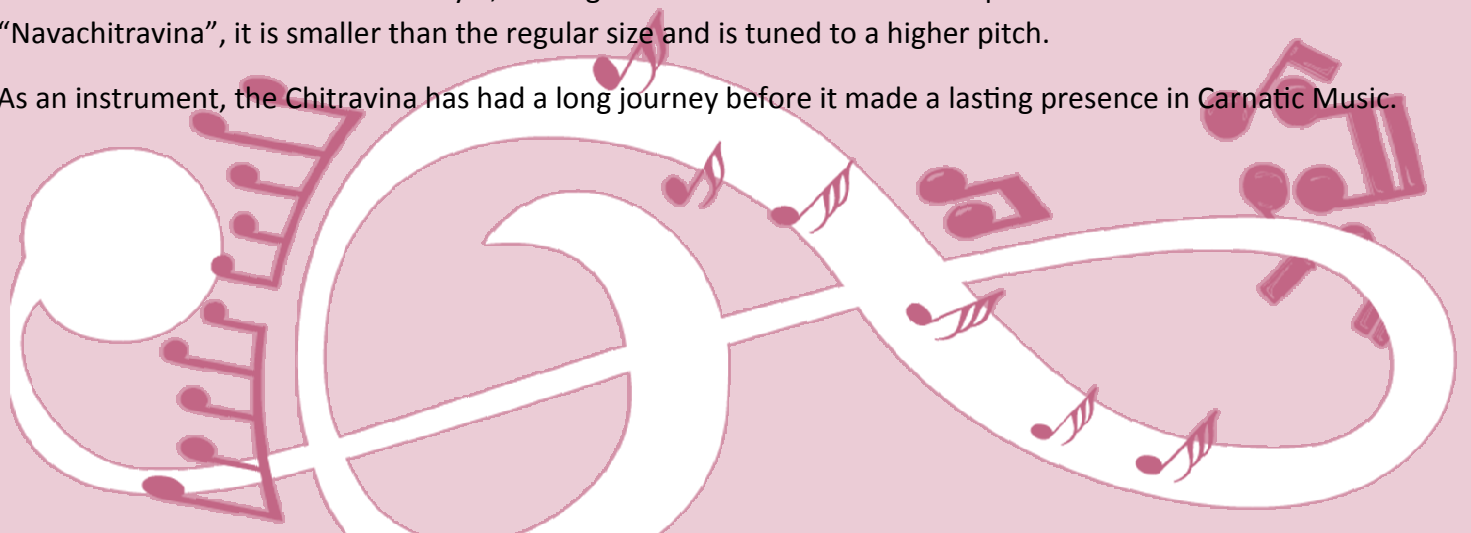
The strings are plucked with two fingers on the right hand, and the “kattai”, a cylindrical block commonly made of Teflon, is glided on the string.

Interestingly, the earliest reference of the Chitravina has been found in Bharata’s Natya Shastra. It was referred to as a seven stringed instrument. Much later, Srinivasa Rao, Sakha Rama Rao, and Gottuvadyam Narayana Iyengar are significant members who made modifications to the instrument while also increasing its popularity in concerts. In fact, Sakha Rama Rao gave the name “Gottuvadyam” to the instrument, which had always been called as “Chitravina” before. Today, both names are used, but “Chitravina” is more common.

There have been many legendary Chitravina players and teachers in the 20th century such as Chitravina Narasimhan, Budalur Krishnamoorthy Shastrigal, Mannargudi Savithri Ammal, A. Narayana Iyer, M. V. Varahaswami, and many more.

Today, Chitravina Ravikiran, a legend himself, collaborated with Rikhi Ram in Delhi to modify the Chitravina for the convenience of our active lifestyle, making the Chitravina easier to transport. Referred to as the “Navachitravina”, it is smaller than the regular size and is tuned to a higher pitch.

As an instrument, the Chitravina has had a long journey before it made a lasting presence in Carnatic Music.



A peek behind the curtains of GLAC and lessons learned

Sankar Krishnan, Auburn Hills, MI

My mobile phone rings while I'm in the middle of a big client meeting somewhere in Ohio. "Hello, this is and as you know I'm performing for Sarovar. I have a problem in getting an air ticket from Boston to Detroit as the cheapest ticket is over \$1000. I politely tell her that I am in the middle of a meeting and that I will call her back. Over the next 6 hours, after over a dozen phone calls in between lunch and dinner meetings with my client, a solution is found. Realizing that GLAC has a member who lives in Toledo, I make a surprise phone call to her (Thank God; all our data is stored in the cloud) and request her to pick up the artist from the train station the next morning and host her till the evening so that I can bring her to Detroit on my way back from Ohio.



While the strategy and planning sessions can be fun, these last minute logistical issues can give one nightmares. On another occasion, a leading musician called from California and she, along with two other artists, were scheduled to be part of a big event here. Her voice on the phone was nothing like I had ever heard and immediately, I knew what was coming. Yes, she, and the other two artists, had sore throats and were not going to be able to make it to participate in the program. Again, several frantic calls later, a back-up plan was put into place.

From a multitude of such experiences, one thing I have learned being a part of the GLAC committee, is that we are responsible for laying out very detailed execution plans with clearly defined and delegated tasks, but at the same time, being able to expect last minute surprises. We use technology extensively for our operations and all the documents are kept in the 'cloud' with editing capability for all the executive members who can access it from anywhere and from any device. Broadly, at the organization level, there are clearly defined functional roles and responsibilities. We invite people to join the organization based on how regular they have been to our concerts. This ensures that the team has a passion for music which is the common bond that unites us. While many of our meetings are over conference calls, we meet periodically and these are some very pleasant moments as we involve each of our families to participate in different fun activities. We have a great team and each person brings a unique value to the organization. I am extremely proud and privileged to lead this team. I must also mention the contributions of the spouses of the members on the exec board - whether it is transportation assistance, hosting, or technical help, they are always there to come forward and pitch in.

Personally, I have learned several management lessons which I have been able to take to my corporate world as well. I will narrate some of them.

APPLYING TECHNOLOGY TO BUSINESS

A couple of our team members are very technology savvy and constantly bring new ideas for implementation. For example, can we have a mobile wallet for gate collection at the concert venues? Or, can we create

a self-service for volunteers to offer us help and so on. Being in the technology industry, one of my day jobs is to understand where and how technology can be applied to business. Wearing the business hat for GLAC, I'm now able to better appreciate that technology has to be implemented judiciously considering the user profile, return on capital, and ease of use ("usability engineering", as our tech buffs might say).

BUILDING ECONOMIC VALUE CHAIN:

I admire Vidwan Shri. Shashi Kiran equally for his musical knowledge and also for his entrepreneurial spirit. As many of you may know, Shashi's recent success in conducting the "Carnatic orchestra" with over 100 children and professional performers at the Cleveland festival this year is a perfect example of building a value chain. Firstly, he had a great idea, which he persistently sold to the organizers. Then, he teamed up with a technology service provider to develop a killer mobile application, which enables anyone to learn music anytime from anywhere in the world. Teaming up with legends to provide content for the app was the next step and the virtuous cycle was then complete, when the collaboration was extended to local schools to motivate their students to be part of it. GLAC V3.0, which we launched last year, is built on the principles taken from this approach - how can we as an organization, keep you, the *rasikas*, at the center, and create a value chain teaming with educational institutions, like-minded organizations, corporations while also consciously developing a brand image. Our partners now include Oakland University, Washtenaw community college, iCarnatic.org and many others. Recognizing GLAC's contribution to the State of Michigan's effort to sustain and grow the arts and cultural life of this region, we received a grant funding from Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs this year. A unique white labeling concept has also been successfully launched, which gives a private group to leverage the infrastructure and the brand of GLAC. The annual Papanasam Sivan festival conducted by Vidwan Shri Ashok Ramani is an example of this initiative.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS:

I am constantly trying to develop and improve my leadership skills as part of this organization. Some of my first lessons when I took on the mantle were to listen to all points of views from different members on the team and only then to take a decision. Again, I'm very fortunate to have such a passionate team in which every member brings a very unique skill set to the table and contributes tremendously to the growth of the organization. I feel that a leader should have a long-term vision, the capability to articulate this vision, and the ability to get his/her team to stand together behind it. A leader must also hold the highest standards of integrity, transparency and, above all, touch the hearts of people. I have told my story many times, about how appreciation and involvement in our culture and music helped me to climb out of deep misery. It is indeed the glue to our internal stability and well-being, and I consider it a lifelong mission to spread this awareness.

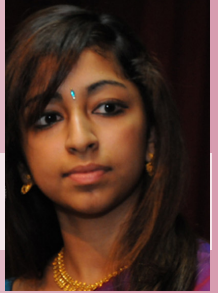
SAROVAR 2013 has a very interesting agenda and I'm sure you will all enjoy it. We believe that its uniqueness, quality, and reach to promote peace and harmony, will enable it to attain global fame over the next few years.

*Excerpts from an interview
with Sabash.com
featuring Keerthana Sankar*

(Interview from Summer 2012)

Living in USA, what brought you into Carnatic music?

My father fostered this interest in me from a very early age by taking me to several concerts and always playing music in our house. I started learning Carnatic music at the age of 5 from him.



You generally perform with your sister Kamyaa and understand you play the Violin too. Who is your Guru? When did you start your performance on the stage?

Yes. Before formal vocal music training, I started learning the violin at the age of 6 from Jayshankar Balan. After continuing with him for four years, I started learning vocal music from Madurai R. Sundar. I gave my first solo violin concert at the age of 11 and did my vocal arangetram at the age of 15. At the age of 15, I started advanced violin training from Delhi Sunderrajan. Since then, I have been accompanying several artists from both the US and India, as well as performing vocal concerts.

When did you sing in Chennai in the past?

I had the privilege of performing during the 2009 December Music Season in Chennai in several sabhas along with my sister, Kamyaa.

Tell us about your present Chennai visit; had you planned performances here?

Coming to Chennai and performing in Raga Sudha Hall this summer was an unexpected yet pleasant surprise for me. I had originally planned on coming to India for these three weeks in order to work in the hospitals of Kodaikanal and advance my future medical career. However those plans did not work out, which explains my time in Chennai for the past week. After only receiving notice about this concert five days before it happened, I had to come up with a song list quickly.

How is Chennai's peak summer? Managing well?

The climate here is so drastically different from the US that there is no telling what effects it can have on the vocal chords. I started facing the challenges of performing in India, specifically the weather and the dust. Unfortunately, there's not much that can be done about this except to keep practicing in order to adjust the vocal chords to these conditions.

How do you feel after your concert?

I was particularly excited to perform under the banner of "Nada Inbam" in Raga Sudha because of the prestige associated with it and the many musically knowledgeable people who come and listen to the concerts held there. It is evident that the heart of Carnatic Music thrives in Chennai and to be able to perform for the audience here is a great honor.

Future plans of Chennai trips?

I look forward to coming back during the 2012 December Season and performing in several sabhas in and around Chennai.

Words of encouragement from a Patron

Dear Sri Sankar,

Radha and I have been somewhat infrequent in attending Carnatic Music concerts or involving in Carnatic music activities for the last several years mainly due to our involvement with Parashakthi Temple and other social activities (not a good excuse!) but, we thought that we should write a few lines to express our good wishes and appreciation of your efforts and that of your team. The Priya Sisters concert which we attended yesterday triggered this unsolicited Email to express our appreciation of the efforts of your team.

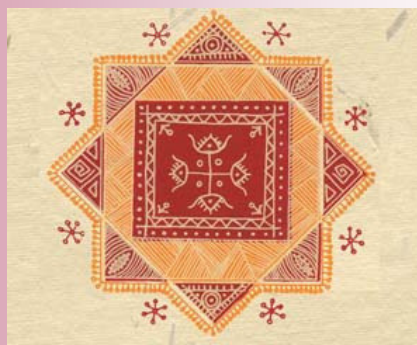
We want to congratulate you and your entire team for taking the Carnatic music scene in our area to greater levels. We have lived in this area now for over 40 years and have been involved in organizing some concerts and hosting artistes in the past. We can remember the early concerts of many of the doyens of Carnatic music arranged by Tamil Sangam and a few by other organizations. We had concerts by T. V. Sankaranarayanan, MS, DKP, MLV, Mani Krishnaswamy, Vedavalli, D. K. Jayaraman, Lalgudi (Violin), T.N. Krishnan (Violin), KVN, TRS, Flute Ramani, Kalyana Krishna Bhagawathar (Veena), and accompanying percussionists like Vellore Ramabhadran, Umayalpuram Sivaraman, Palakkad Raghu, Raja Rao and Others. However, the attendance was often low partly because there was no coordination between the various organizations and partly because the number of Carnatic music enthusiasts in the area was fewer. The attendance improved when some of the younger artistes like Unnikrishnan, Sudha Raghunathan, Sowmya, T.M. Krishna and others gave concerts under the aegis of Tamil Sangam and Great Lakes Aradhana Committee. But now, the present Great Lakes Aradhana Committee as a whole first under the leadership of our friend B.N.Sudhindranath and now under your leadership have taken the music scene here to a much greater level by reaching out to all Rasikas in the area by your dedicated organizational abilities and inclusive nature which have brought many Rasikas to appreciate and attend concerts.

The idea of organizing the Sarovar and making concerts into Indo American music concerts is a move in the right direction. Congratulations to all of you on the Funding by the Council of Arts and cultural Affairs State of Michigan and the Detroit Recreational Department. People may not realize how much work goes into writing a grant and how hard it is to get such grants. Good Luck and May Goddess Vak-Devi Saraswathy and the Music Trinity bless everyone to make Michigan into another great Center of Music in general and Carnatic music in particular in North America. Let us hope that the day is not far off to see Sarovar programs broadcast through Jaya/ Sun/ Pothigai TV etc. One request: Can you please consider and discuss the pros-cons of renaming the organization as Great Lakes Aradhana Music Academy or any other word that is more inclusive since the word Committee gives the impression of a narrow group?

Thank you and again wishing you all the Best.

With Regards,

Venkat Hari



Membership Types

- Lifetime supporter 1-time payment of \$1500 / family
- Annual supporter Yearly payment of \$140 / family
- Single supporter Yearly payment of \$ 75 / person
- Senior Citizen Yearly payment of \$ 50 / person
- Full Time Student Yearly payment of \$ 50 / person

By supporting GLAC with your membership, you also get free admission to all the GLAC concerts and events including the Indo-American Festival of Performing Arts, Michigan Thyagaraja Aradhana, Navarathri Festival Program and more.

Carnatic Music

Composition Primer

Gopal Venkataraman, Las Vegas NV



One of the many treasures that we cherish even today in the arena of Carnatic music is listening to the numerous music compositions being performed by professional artists and enthusiasts all around the world. Historically, Carnatic Music compositions have been lyrically and musically composed by the legendary musicians of yore. The trinity composers of Carnatic music, Saint *Thyagaraja*, *Muthuswami Dikshitar* and *Syama Sastri* and many other composers of their ilk wrote devotional lyrics on various Gods, composed music, wrote down music notations for each of their song compositions and also premiered them live in the temples. .

Our attempt at a grass-roots level is to try to identify and understand the ingredients of such magnificent compositions in general and formulate the foundation required to write new compositions. Although it is a pretty far-fetched idea to be able to match the caliber of these divine composers, it is quite a privilege in itself to be inspired by these compositions and recognize the science behind the art of music composition.

First, let us observe the ingredients that play as essential features in the composition of the song. When you embark on writing a Carnatic Classical Music based devotional song, these essential features that are the building blocks of the song need to be understood clearly in its entirety :

Lyrical :

This essential feature includes the words and phrases that make up the lyrical content of the song. The lyrics convey the message in the text of the song. The lyrics in a devotional song is usually a description, in praise or a story snap shot of the form of God or Goddess being written about. The lyrics can be broadly classified based on the following categories: Subject, Content, Language and Rhyme scheme.

Musical :

This essential feature of music composition includes the melody or tune of the song that influences and enhances the lyrical component interwoven into a pre-determined rhythmic pattern (*thaaLam* and the *naDai*) and all encapsulated into the song for listening pleasure. The melody or tune is called *ragam*. Each *raagam* can bring out a particular emotion. Broadly classified, emotions could come under Happy, Sad, Fear, Anger or peaceful.

Rhythmic :

This essential feature of song composition defines how the lyrical component is inter-woven into melodic component to create the song. The rhythmic feature of the song is defined by the

Meter : It is the basic building block of a phrase or a sentence of the lyrical content that closely follows the rhythm pattern. The words should fit in the meter of the rhythm.

eDuppu : This defines where the lyrics of the song start for each cycle of the *thaaLam*.

Tempo (kaalam) : This is the ideal speed at which the song is laid out by the composer in the form of the notations. Although the absolute speed *chauka* (slow), *madhyama* (medium) and *durita* (fast) speeds are relative to each other, the actual speed could be what the performing artist decides to render it in.

Contextual :

Although most Carnatic devotional songs are performed at a vocal/instrumental concert, the song composition can be better formulated when the song is composed for a dance recital where the lyrical aspect of the song

can be better embellished by the classical dance expressions which add an additional visual dimension to the song, the lyrics, the elaboration of the raagam's nuances and thaalam variations. Historically, Carnatic music compositions have been written with the beginning first line or two called the *pallavi*, followed by a few lines of *anupallavi* followed by one or more verses called *charanam(s)*. Some compositions are interspersed with *swaram* patterns called *chiTTaiswaram* using the alphabet of musical notes (viz., s, r, g, m, p, d, n S) and jathi patterns or *sollu kattus* (viz., taka, takita, dimita, jonuta, etc.) forming a unique rhythmic concoction within the song. These are usually composed in a faster tempo (*madhyama or durita kaalam*) than the lyrical parts of the song to maintain a contrast and stand out.

Ownership

Traditionally, most Carnatic music compositions are embedded with the signature word or phrase called the *mudra* to identify the composer with the song. St. Thyagaraja used the signature "*thyagaraja*", Muthuswamy Dikshitar used "*Guru Guha*", Syama Sasthri used "*Syama Krishna*" and Purandara Dasa used "*purandara vittala*" and so on. This was a common practice among many composers just so that the song remains attached to the composer over the centuries and we have seen it has worked quite well. It is thus a good idea to come up with one's own *mudra* and embed it into the lyrics of the song to ensure the affiliation of the composer to the song for generations to come.

Exposure

In addition to a good education in learning, experience in performing Carnatic music for several years and expertise in reading and writing in a language of one's choice, perseverance and hard work is required in exposing oneself to existing compositions so as to align oneself towards the art of music composition. Studying the works of many of the divine Carnatic music composers, closely comprehending their lyrical ability, the emotional content of their compositions, recognizing their musical expertise, their notating abilities and closely listening to the interpretation and performance of these compositions by performing artists of various genres surely does inspire one to gradually attain the ability to gain enough confidence to try a hand at music composition. In the current world fueled by internet, there are ample opportunities to find archived recordings of Carnatic music compositions that could channel one's quest for the knowledge required to become a music composer.

Once the song is composed, notated and premiered at a recital, It takes a while to take shape, flow, attain finesse and gain popularity among the listeners. The finesse is achieved gradually based on the interpretation of the song by the singer and how he or she performs it at a recital. The same song could actually sound much better and more refined when rendered by experienced artists as they have gained polish over repeated renditions.

Although music composition is considered a fine art that only a handful are capable of doing and these individuals are eulogized as "gifted" and "highly talented", it is indeed an art form of music composition that has a science behind it on how it is formulated. However, the art of music composition is undoubtedly due to the divine grace of the God Almighty showered on an aspiring music composer and is said to have been perfected when one has attained the clarity of the thought process to comprehend all of the above influencing elements of music composition before venturing into writing music. Like all of the fine art forms, music composition is not a destination but a delightful journey towards eternal bliss

(This is an abridged version and you can contact the author at gopalven@yahoo.com for the full version)

Gopalakrishna Bharathi : *A lesser-known musical saint*



Gopalakrishna Bharathi (GB) is one of those unique and exceptional Carnatic music composers whose great immortal creation and magnum opus “Nandanar Charittiram” overshadowed his own personal life.

Thirunaalaipovar, procrastinator of the holy pilgrimage, was how Nandan, a low caste bonded farm laborer was referred to. Going to Chidambaram to have the great darshan of the God Nataraja was his life’s greatest ambition and dream. His intense longing began to materialize when one day against all odds he decided to travel by foot

to Chidambaram. He stopped over at the holy town of Thirupungur. Nandan personally dug a well for the benefit of the devotees there. He could not have darshan of the Lord Shiva there since he was not permitted inside the temple because of his caste status. GB’s place and time of birth is disputed. But accepted versions state that it was 1811 at Narimanam to Sivarama Bharathi. Born in a family enriched by Sanskrit and music scholars, he spent his early life in Mudikondaan learning philosophy, Sanskrit and music. His penchant for music made him move to Thiruvudaimarudur to learn music from Ramadas Rao & Ghanam Krishna Iyer.

In his early life, GB lived in abject poverty working as a cook in a temple in village Koothanoor. Apparently physically very unimpressive his musical and composing skills rapidly blossomed as he began singing in weddings, festivals etc. He soon began attracting a fan base but chose to live in great simplicity; at the porch of his disciple’s home. His only material possession was a violin that he would incessantly practice on. Intellectually and spiritually GB was increasingly drawn towards Lord Nataraja. He was immersed by the deep philosophical and mystic significance of the great cosmic dancing deity Lord Shiva. Here his songs were sung in great fervor and Nandanar’s statue in the temple and his legend had a powerful influence on him.

The turning point in his life occurred when on a visit to Nagapattinam, a chettiar friend requested him to compose the story of any nayanar. GB grabbed this opportunity and composed the opera “Nandan Charittiram”. The drama was eloquently composed with a great story line consisting of exploited bonded laborers, their living conditions, cunning landlords, the scenic beauty of Tanjore and of course the grand finale at Chidambaram. This opera was performed at Nagapattinam and it became an instant and phenomenal success. The reception was so intense that he had to perform again and again. This apparently paralyzed the entire life in the town that it attracted the attention of the French collector in Kaaraikaal. The Frenchman had very good knowledge of Tamil and was greatly moved by the opera that he fully paid the cost of publishing the play as a book.

That was the point of no return in GB’s life. Accolades, awards, invitations to perform more and more followed. His remuneration was Rs.50 and more (worth what today?), but he never took anything from it directing his sponsors to donate on his behalf to any charitable cause. Obviously, the temples at Chidambaram and Mayuram got the major share. It is said that Saint Thyagaraja praised him greatly when they met. Inspired by the saint himself he composed five songs in the same ragas as in pancharatnam. Besides many other songs GB composed operas on Kaaraikaal ammaiyaar charittiram and Iyarpagai nayanar charittiram. Unfortunately, many of his compositions are either lost or worse not sung in the original tune it was set. Tamil scholars U.V. Swaminatha Iyer (had personally met and lived with GB) and M.S Ramaswami Iyer wrote great biographies published in 1927 and 1936.

The immortal GB attained his heavenly abode in 1896. He died as a bachelor.

Love Music? Want to Learn?

Anytime. Any place. Any Age. At your pace



Musiguru



Learn from the Carnatic Greats

Dreamt of learning music from the living Legend Dr. Balamuralikrishna? Musiguru now makes your dream a reality!

Incredible learning experience from celebrities, music pundits and inspirational young achievers.

Chitravina Ravikiran, Neyveli Santanagopalan, V. Subramaniam, Suguna Purushothaman, Suguna Varadachari, Gayatri Venkataraghavan, Abhishek Raghuram, Carnatica brothers, Padma Shankar, and other greats are now on Musiguru.

Your aspirations, Delivered!!

The definitive companion for music learning

Students at all levels can complement their training by practising and sharing with their teachers for feedback.

Many interesting packs for students and music lovers to explore different facets of Carnatic music.



Musiguru conceptualized, designed and developed by Levitum.
Innovative curriculum for Musiguru designed by K.N Shashikiran.

Visit www.musiguru.in and register today for a special subscription price to our entire Carnatic music learning courses and packs.

Do not miss this limited offer to learn from the Greats!

Available on



iPhone iPad Web



An Interlude with the “Music Man”

*Krithika Rajkumar
Auburn Hills, MI*

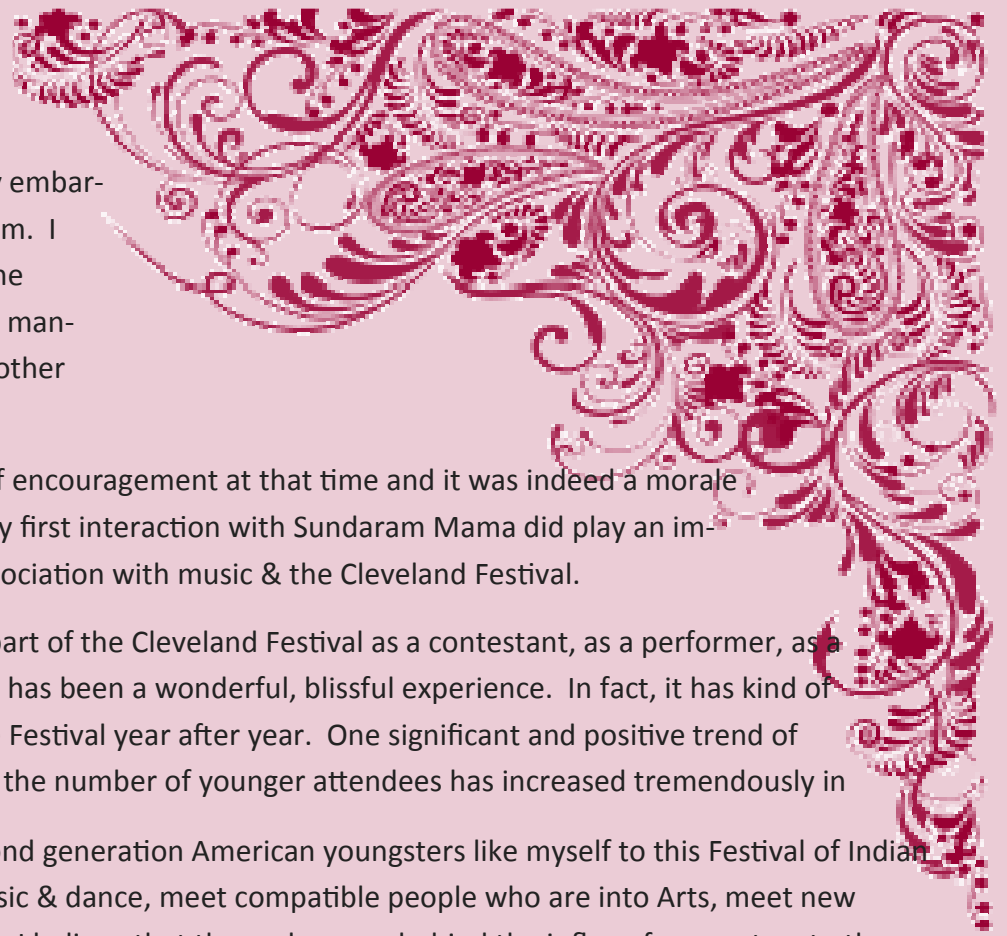


who was participating in the music competition was going to be there and the prospect of spending the entire Easter weekend with her sounded like so much fun! Finally, the much awaited Easter break arrived and we were off to Cleveland. The three hour road trip from Detroit to Michigan was full of anticipation and excitement!

It was Good Friday morning, the day of the music competition. All of us, including the contestants & their parents, the judges, the volunteers, and all other attendees assembled at the popular Waetjen Auditorium for the welcome address. There was a sudden buzz in the audience and an uncle clad in dhoti, kurta & a shawl hanging over his left shoulder and vibuti (holy ash) & kumkum (vermillion) on his forehead walked up to the podium and from the whisperings of the people sitting behind me, I understood he was someone very significant who was referred to as Cleveland Sundaram. He started addressing the audience and the first thought that came to my mind was, “This uncle is really charming and eloquent!”

The competition began and my jaw dropped when kid after kid went up on stage and sang like a seasoned musician; some of these kids were only 4 & 5 years old! I was so inspired and decided that not only will I attend the festival the following year but will also take part in the competition. So I became a little more serious about my music lessons and even started practicing regularly in order to prepare myself for the competition. I was slowly but surely making some progress in music and in the year 2000, my parents registered me for my first-ever music competition. I was excited and also a little anxious but successfully participated in the competition and everyone including my parents thought I gave a satisfactory performance. I vividly remember singing "Gayiye Ganapathi", a Tulasidas composition in ragam Valaji. In 2001, I was in the older Junior category of the competition and I was obviously a little nervous. My turn arrived, the judges looked at my choice list of songs and picked "Balakanakamaya" in Atana. I finished the Pallavi, & Anupallavi and I was about to sing the charanam, and lo and behold, I completely blanked out on the lyrics of the krithi and somehow managed to finish singing the whole song in "akaaram" without any words. I saw the judges smiling and also exchanging

My association with the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana began in the year 1998 when I was six years old! My grandparents were visiting from India and since they were great music enthusiasts, my parents thought it will be a great idea to take them to this much talked about music festival in Cleveland. I was so excited about this trip not because I was into Carnatic music or anything... of course I was learning music but my only focus and interest at that time was Bharatanatyam.... but my best friend




some bewildered looks! Well, I was visibly embarrassed and wanted to quickly exit the room. I was almost out of the room when someone tapped me on my shoulder and said, "You managed really well. Keep it up!" It was none other than Sundaram Mama!!

I definitely needed to hear those words of encouragement at that time and it was indeed a morale booster. I believe that this episode and my first interaction with Sundaram Mama did play an important role in my long and continued association with music & the Cleveland Festival.

Over the past 15 plus years, I have been part of the Cleveland Festival as a contestant, as a performer, as a volunteer and as also an ardent fan and it has been a wonderful, blissful experience. In fact, it has kind of become our family tradition to attend the Festival year after year. One significant and positive trend of the Festival that I noticed this year is that the number of younger attendees has increased tremendously in recent times. So, what really attracts second generation American youngsters like myself to this Festival of Indian Music & Dance? Yes, to enjoy quality music & dance, meet compatible people who are into Arts, meet new friends, and of course have fun. However, I believe that the real reason behind the influx of youngsters to the Festival is the hope and assurance that it offers to aspiring musicians and dancers for a bright, artistic future. The youngsters seem to be deriving this sense of optimism and hope for the future from the kindling spirit behind the festival, Veeravalur V. Sundaram a.k.a Sundaram Mama!

From the time I came in contact with Sundaram Mama, I have observed that no matter how busy he is, he always made time to listen to youngsters and has always been encouraging and supportive of our sincere efforts. If we have the passion, ready to make time for the arts and are willing to work hard, Sundaram Mama is ever ready to provide a platform to exhibit our talents. His initiative of Sustaining Sampradaya concerts, the Ramayana dance drama series, the Carnatic Music Idol USA are some projects specifically planned to benefit and promote the talent of young Indian Americans. During this year's Cleveland Festival held in March/April, I had this rare opportunity to sit down and talk to Sundaram Mama in the midst of his busy schedule and he graciously shared some interesting information about himself and his thoughts about the Festival. He fondly remembered his days in Tirunelveli where he was born and grew up until his undergrad studies were completed. He attributes his initial interest in music to the compulsory music education imparted to the girl members of the family. He said the girls would be woken up at 4 a.m. to do their "sadhakam", daily practice of music, which continued till 6 AM. and then again the music teacher would also come every day in the evening to teach them. This relentless 24/7 exposure to music instilled great interest for music in him which has now become a passion. When asked if he ever imagined that the Festival would grow so much to be known at the international level, he exclaimed, "No, not all! A bunch of us who loved music and dance got together and started it for fun, and believe me, it is still fun! When it began it was very informal, just a friendly and non-structured kind of an event. And we never imagined that this



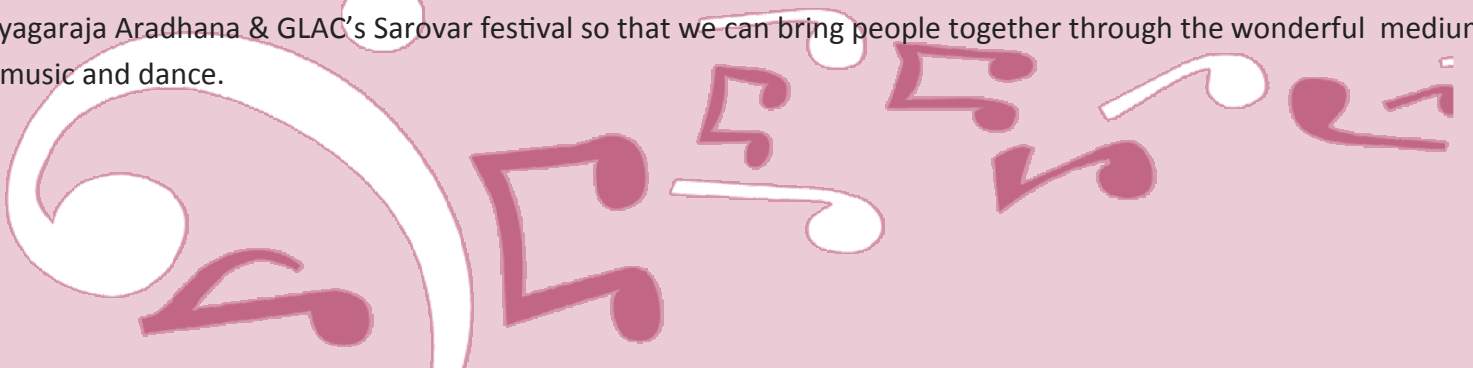
would grow this big and become the largest music & dance festival outside India. Even now we do not have a 5 year plan... actually we do not have next year's plan. We are always like this year's Festival

for us!"To the question of some of the unique problems that they faced during the initial years of the festival and in the recent years, he mentioned that finance has always been a consistent problem. When the Festival was conducted for one day, their deficit ran into a few hundreds to a few thousand dollars and

now when the Festival is run over 10 days, the deficit runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars. He also recollected that life was fairly simple back in the 70's & early 80's as filling out a visa application and bringing an artiste into this country was just a formality. However, after 9/11 happened, there have been safety concerns and with the heightened security procedures, and it is a big challenge to get visas for the artistes. They are also faced with problem of getting a good line of artistes that will

appeal to a wide spectrum of the audience. In addition, it is also a challenge trying to find the right balance between music & dance, heavy classical to classical to light classical, vocal & instrumental music, and to have representation from various regions of India. And when they try to do this balancing act, even though there are 80 - 85 slots over the 12 day festival, it becomes impossible to accommodate. When I requested him to offer his words of advise to aspiring musicians and dancers, he stated that the classical art forms are not very easy and if you expect to lead a comfortable life by choosing it as a profession, it may not be as easy as it is for a person in the medical or engineering field. An average doctor or engineer is able lead a middle class or an upper middle class life. However, we cannot expect that for an average dancer or musician. So, it is a really demanding profession and insecurities are high but the rewards are also high not only in terms of money but also in terms of inner satisfaction. The satisfaction that you derive from pursuing an art form is unparalleled; you may lose your wealth, you may lose your friends and even your family, but your dance or music will be your companion for life! So, if you pursue art for the sake of art, it is all good but if you are pursuing an art form for the sake of fame and accolades, you are asking for some major disappointments and frustrations in life. However, if you know you have the required talent and the ability to overcome the demands of this profession to get to the top, GO FOR IT — it will still be a rewarding and fulfilling experience!!

It was absolutely delightful talking to Sundaram Mama and he is indeed a true inspiration to all of us, especially the younger generation of Indian Americans who have a huge responsibility of sustaining and carrying forward the artistic and cultural treasures of India to the next generation. We must continue to support initiatives like the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana & GLAC's Sarovar festival so that we can bring people together through the wonderful medium of music and dance.



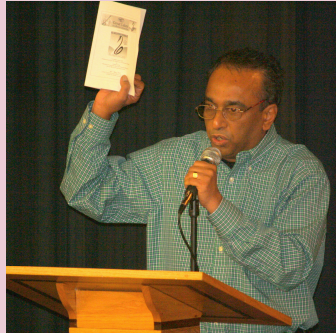
Sarovar 2013



An Exposé on Bharata Natyam
Dance Performance & Demonstration
by
Smt. Meenakshi Chitharanjan
&
Ms. Ildikó Gulyás
(on April 10, 2013)



Vocal concert
by
Priya Sisters
Smt. Haripriya
&
Smt. Shanmukhapriya
(on April 20, 2013)



From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Greetings! I had the pleasant task of serving as the editor of the Sarovar Festival Souvenir this year. I would like to thank Mr. Sankar Krishnan and my fellow team members for this wonderful opportunity. I would also like to extend my grateful thanks to all the writers for their invaluable contributions to the Souvenir and to my family & friends for all their support in my humble endeavor.

Enjoy Sarovar 2013, and looking forward to your continued support & patronage.

Musically yours,

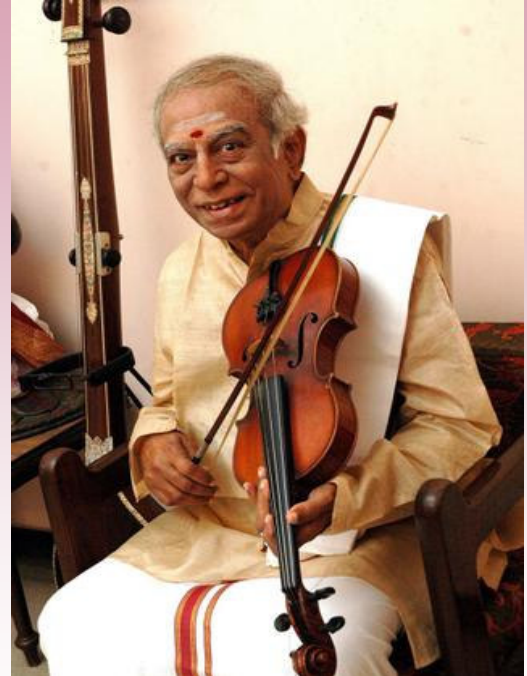
Ganga Rajkumar



Brochure Design: Akshaya Rajkumar



Sri M.S. Gopalakrishnan



Sri Lalgudi G. Jayaraman



Pandit Ravi Shankar

*Our humble homage to the Indian Music Legends
who passed away in 2013 and left a big void in our
Music World.*

CHARSUR DIGITAL WORKSTATION



introduces Digital Membership



an exclusive offer for

GLAC

Patron & Members only

Features

- DOWNLOAD 24 OR MORE NEW PRODUCTS FROM CHARSUR
- EXCLUSIVE USER ID AND PASSWORD FOR DOWNLOADS
- MEMEBERSHIP VALID FOR ONE YEAR
- ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTION EXTENDABLE TO THREE YEARS
- SPECIAL OFFERS ON OTHER PRODUCTS AND FESTIVAL WEBCASTS

Special Offer

1 YEAR
USD 325
USD 250



www.charsur.com

With Best Compliments From

Gita Travels

For All Your Travel Needs

Geetha Pradeep

(248) 689-5201



A PROUD SUPPORTER OF THE

***INDO-AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF PERFORMING ARTS
- SAROVAR 2013***



**ST. JOSEPH MERCY
OAKLAND**

SAINT JOSEPH MERCY HEALTH SYSTEM

For a physician referral, call 800-372-6094
or visit our web site at stjoesoakland.org

DISCOVER  REMARKABLE