

Profile of Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi

Among the many accolades and awards Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi has earned in her journey as a musician, there is one she holds close to her heart - a compliment from Bharat Ratna Pandit Ravi Shankar "You have your father's fingers. Your music has touched my soul." Panditji was the guest of honour at her performance at the Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego, United States, in 2015, and this is what he said to Vijayalakshmi as she sought his blessings after the concert.

Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi is a fifth generation musician of the illustrious Lalgudi bani. Daughter and disciple of legendary maestro Padma Bhushan Sri Lalgudi G Jayaraman, Vijayalakshmi's foray into the world of music was but natural. Born into a household steeped in music and growing up with it as her constant companion, Vijayalakshmi gravitated towards it showing promise and potential. When she turned five, her father, a guru par excellence, initiated her into the world of the violin. At thirteen, she made her formal stage debut. Just as she stepped out of her teens, Vijayalakshmi came into her own, unfurling to the world an artiste who could perform solo, collaborate and share stage space with her illustrious father and brother. Quiet and dignified, her music sparkled with a style and character of its own – rooted and resilient, free-flowing and flexible, a coming together of emotions with an abundance of empathy. Soulful is a befitting word to describe her music.

In the mid '80s, a 30-city tour around North America set off her journey as a performing artiste. There has been no looking back since. A violinist par excellence and a vocalist of repute, her performing career is as versatile and varied as her talent; a solo artiste, an alter ego and violin duet partner of her brother Lalgudi GJR Krishnan, a virtuoso with absolute mastery over his music. Vijayalakshmi has also provided violin accompaniment to other well-known vocalists and musicians – Sri T. V. Gopalakrishnan, Smt. Parassala Ponnammal, Sri O. S. Thiagarajan, Smt. Aruna Sairam, Smt. Sudha Raghunathan, Sri Chitravina Ravikiran, Sri Vijay Siva, Malladi Brothers, Abhishek Raghuram, TNS Krishna to name a few, complementing and enhancing the overall musical experience with her sensitive accompaniment. Vijayalakshmi has travelled far and wide with her violin and her voice, allowing people across the world - USA, Canada, the UK, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia Middle East, and Russia - to soak in the magic of her music.

Over the years, with her creativity and flair, focus and perseverance, Vijayalakshmi has accomplished much, and along with her brother, taken the Lalgudi bani and tradition forward without ever compromising its core. Her music and achievements have been recognised with awards and accolades aplenty –

- *Yuva Kala Bharathi* - Bharat Kalachar, Chennai
- *Sangeetha Kalasagara* - Kalasagaram, Hyderabad
- *Sangeetha Choodamani* - Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai
- *Tantri Nada Mani* from his Holiness Jayendra Swamigal
- *Kanchipuram Award for Excellence* - Maharajapuram Santhanam Foundation, Chennai
- *Best Accompanist Award* - The Music Academy, Chennai
- *Kalki Krishnamoorthy Memorial Award* - Kalki Krishnamurthy Foundation, Chennai

- *Indira Sivasailam Endowment award* - jointly by The Indira Sivasailam Foundation and The Music Academy, Chennai
- *Nadha Vallabha* - Nadha Sudha, Chennai
- *National Eminence Award* – Sri Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Sabha, Chennai
- *Kalaimamani* – Tamil Nadu State
- *Vishwa Kala Ratna* – Milapfest, England
- *Sangeetha Rathnakara*, Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana, USA
- *Lifetime Achievement Award*, Indian Fine Arts Academy, San Diego, USA

Vijayalakshmi and her brother Lalgudi Krishnan are joint recipients of the prestigious *Sangita Kalanidhi* award for 2022 by The Music Academy, Chennai.

Along the course of her career, Vijayalakshmi has collaborated with musicians from across classical genres and has dabbled in the world of fusion too. These collaborations include jugalbandis with leading Hindustani musicians – Ustad Shahid Parvez Khan (sitar), Debasish Bhattacharya (slide guitar), Kala Ramnath (violin), Murad Ali (sarangi), Pravin Godkhindi (flute) to name a few.

One of her early projects was as the lead artiste for a music ensemble - Violin, Venu (flute) and Veena - a concept pioneered by Sri Lalgudi G Jayaraman across 50 concerts. She led a first-of-its-kind, all-women Violin-Venu-Veena ensemble on a very successful concert tour of the United States performing over 15 concerts. She has also cut a VVV album with Jayanti Kumaresh (veena) and Mala Chandrasekhar (flute).

Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi is a composer in her own right, and has to her credit a few thillanas and varnams. In 2017, she along with her brother Lalgudi GJR Krishnan composed both lyrics and music for a dance drama 'SAMBHAVAMI YUGE YUGE' which was premiered in Cleveland and won the appreciation of many dance exponents. In 2023, the siblings composed a full length dance drama 'OOZH – The Divine Destiny', which was also premiered in Cleveland and won the hearts of performers and audiences alike. Both productions have also been staged in Chennai, and delighted the home audience of rasikas, musicians and dancers.

She is a tunesmith, having tuned many compositions including Adi Sankara's slokas, Mahakavi Bharathiar's poems, and her own poems. Vijayalakshmi recently released an album 'Shuddha Swaroopam', featuring select poems of Kaviyogi Shuddhananda Bharathi, tuned by her and sung by eminent and leading vocalists Bombay Jayashri, Abhishek Raghuram, Amritha Murali, Bharat Sundar.

In Sept 2017, Vijayalakshmi successfully staged a thematic presentation called 'Pancha Bhootham', in Dallas, USA, for which she composed many orchestral musical pieces, trained over 50 high school children for many months, and performed with these children. The program was a huge success and won great appreciation.

Vijayalakshmi is a teacher with empathy - she loves sharing her music, and does so with a diverse set of students, many of whom are readying to take flight on their own in the world of Carnatic music.

A scholar and a presenter across many forums in the country and the world, she has delivered many well-researched and meaningful lectures on various aspects of music, including the music and musicality of the Lalgudi bani.

Vijayalakshmi has a natural way with words, and often comes up with a poetic turn of phrase on impulse, drawing inspiration from nature and simple every day occurrences. She has put over 100 such poems to paper, in English and Tamil, and these have won many hearts.

In 2014, Vijayalakshmi launched Krutagnya (Sanskrit for gratitude), a trust aimed at creating awareness about varied aspects of music through a series of lectures and workshops, and provide a stage for budding violinists from different schools to showcase their talent. Krutagnya's activities include an annual event 'Violin Vaibhavam', a day-long event with short concerts by young and upcoming Carnatic violinists from all schools.