

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 comment by Bharat Ratna Pandit Ravi Shankar, who was the guest of honour at her performance at the Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego, United States, in 2015. Following her performance, Pandit ji took her hands into his own and as he offered her his blessings, he said, "You have your father's fingers. Your music has touched my soul."

Soulful is a befitting word to describe the music of Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi, a fifth generation musician of the illustrious Lalgudi bani, an artiste in her own right and one wears many hats. A violinist par excellence and a vocalist worth reckoning, her performance career is as versatile and varied as her talent; a solo artiste who also has a dual identity in her collaboration with her brother, Lalgudi G J R Krishnan, a virtuoso with absolute mastery over his music. Vijayalakshmi also accompanies other well-known vocalists and musicians, complementing their potential and enhancing the overall experience of a performance with her mastery over music. To name a few Smt Aruna Sairam, Smt Sudha Raghunathan, Sri T.V.Gopalakrishnan, Sri O.S.Thiagarajan, Sri Vijayasiva and Sri Chitravina Ravikiran.Malladi Brothers.

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, baby Vijayalakshmi gravitated towards it showing both promise and potential. Even as a toddler, she identified the solfa syllables in any musical phrase that her father either sang or played to her. When she turned five, her father, a guru par excellence, became her teacher, initiating her into the world of the violin and allowing her to discover the world of music that he had so inimitably made his own. At thirteen, she made her formal stage debut. Slowly but steadily, one performance after another led to her blooming as a performance artiste. Just as she stepped out of her teens, Vijayalakshmi came of her own, unfurling to the world, an artiste who had the talent and the bent of mind to be able to perform solo, collaborate and share stage space with the menfolk in her home; 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...

In the mid 80s, a 30-city tour around North America set off her soulful journey as a performing artiste. There has been no looking back, since. With a slew of performances – solos, trios and duets - under her belt, Vijayalakshmi, who holds a Master's degree in English Literature and a Diploma in Music, is counted as a torchbearer of the Lalgudi bani, taking tradition forward without ever compromising its core.

Over the years, 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 this music. Incidentally, she is also an accomplished vocalist, carrying forward the Lalgudi bani, and has released a host of albums

as a vocalist.

Her music has won her awards and accolades aplenty -

Yuva Kala Bharathi, Bharat Kalachar, Chennai.
Sangeetha Kala Sagara by Kalasagaram, Hyderabad,
Sangeetha Choodamani by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai,
Tantri Nada Mani by 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
Indira Sivasailam Endowment award jointly by The Indira Sivasailam
Foundation and The Music Academy.

If aesthetics is the spine of her music, collaboration and innovation are its ever-lasting companions, urging her to seek continually and grow and widen her own repertoire. Along the course of her career, Vijayalakhmi has collaborated with musicians from across classical genres and has dabbled in the world of fusion too. She has also had the opportunity of sharing the stage in jugalbandis with her counterparts from the world of Hindustani music – Kala Ramnath, Shahid Parvez, Debasish Mukherjee to name a few. One among her several projects include her trust as the leading artiste for a music ensemble - Violin, Venu (flute) and Veena - a concept pioneered by Sri Lalgudi G Jayaraman across 50 concerts. She also holds the distinction of conducting a first-of- its-kind, all-women Violin-Venu-Veena ensemble on a very successful concert tour of the United States.

Recently in Sept 2017, she successfully presented an orchestral thematic presentation called 'Pancha Bhootham', in Dallas, USA. This fund raiser program involving over 50 high school children, won great appreciation music lovers.

Like her father, Vijayalakshmi is a teacher with empathy; she loves sharing her music with a diverse set of students, many among whom are readying to fly 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 very well-researched and meaningful lectures on various aspects pertaining to the music and musicality of the Lalgudi bani.

In her attempt to make music accessible and with a desire to allow the less privileged in society to engage with it, Vijayalakshmi launched Kruthagnya (Sanskrit for gratitude), a trust that works towards creating awareness about varied aspects of music through a series of lectures and workshops in collaboration with schools and universities across the world, free of cost. Stemming from her own desire and need to create for music, at large, a cross-cultural binding between Carnatic and Western music systems. After all, in her world of music, as far as possibilities in creations and creativity are concerned, both within and around, the sky is the limit.