

Lalgudi GJR Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi

Lalgudi Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi belong to the fifth generation in the *sishya parampara* of the saint composer *Sadhguru Tyagaraja*. They were groomed in music under their gurus - their grandfather Sri Lalgudi Gopala Iyer and father legendary violinist-composer Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman. The duo has imbibed the essence of the *Lalgudi bani* and enhanced it significantly by their own virtuosity and creativity.

Lalgudi Krishnan's debut in 1973 was graced by the presence of both his gurus. His music is noted for its sensitive tonality, spontaneity, tasteful exploration of *vivadi ragas*, innovative *kalpana svaras* replete with melody, intricate rhythmic patterning and innovative *korvais*, which have been acclaimed by veteran masters and contemporary musicians.

Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi first went on stage in 1979. Gifted with a fine sense of aesthetics, Vijayalakshmi's music is replete with *raga bhava* and *saukhyam*. Vijayalakshmi's raga essays instantly capture the essence and soul of the raga, with a freshness of perspective in every exposition. Pandit Ravi Shankar himself once observed, 'You have your father's fingers!'

Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi are best known for their scintillating violin duet concerts. Their duets are marked by pristine classicism and musical dignity, exquisite melody and intricate rhythm, deep intellect, refreshing creativity, instrumental virtuosity, wide repertoire, interesting and stimulating pallavis, engaging impromptu raga and swara repartees. Though they are both torch bearers of the Lalgudi bani, their styles are in fact distinct and contrasting in a way that complements each other and enhances the beauty and concert experience. They also perform solos, where audiences get to enjoy their respective individual styles. True to their bani, they use their commendable violin virtuosity to project *artha bhava* and *raga bhava* rather than to showcase instrumental skill for its own sake.

Krishnan has also provided violin accompaniment to legendary musicians such as the doyen Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Sri Maharajapuram Santhanam, Sri D.K. Jayaraman, Sri Neddunuri Krishnamurthy, Sri N. Ramani and Sri Voleti Venkateswarulu. He made a choice many years ago to move away from accompaniment to focus exclusively on solos and duets, drawn by the phenomenal potential of the instrument and his faith in his own musical mastery.

Vijayalakshmi has shared the stage as an accompanist with many stalwarts like Sri T.V. Gopalakrishnan, Smt Parassala Ponnammal, Sri O.S. Thyagarajan, Smt Aruna Sairam, Smt Sudha Ragunathan, Sri Ravi Kiran, Sri Vijay Siva and Sri T.N.S. Krishna.

As a composer Krishnan has worked with many dancers in successful dance productions such as *Jagat Pavani Ganga*, *Sai Nathane Varuga Varuga*. Vijayalakshmi has composed beautifully structured and mellifluous varnams and thillanas. She has also provided lilting musical forms to works of Adi Sankara, Mahakavi Bharathiyar,

Shuddhananda Bharati. Her orchestral piece *Panchabhootham* was staged by high school students in Dallas, USA.

Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi have also collaborated on many projects. The album *Raga Rasa*, an orchestral work for instrumental ensembles, deserves special mention. In this album, Krishnan's visualisation of the classic Ahiri or the wondrous nature of Kosalam exemplify his musical vision, while Vijayalakshmi's Sindhubhairavi composition based on western chords, and Amritavarshini set to a thirteen beat rhythmic cycle are stellar examples of her creativity. Another major collaborative project is the full length dance drama *Sambhavami Yuge Yuge*, commissioned by The Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana, for which Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi together composed both lyrics and music.

Krishnan has collaborated in Jugalbandhis with Hindustani musicians such as Ustad Shahid Parvez, Ustad Shujaat Khan, Pandit Gaurav Majumdar, Pandit Viswa Mohan Bhat, Pandit Tejendra Majumdar, Pandit Debashish Bhattacharya and Pandit Dhruva Ghosh. Vijayalakshmi has likewise performed with renowned Hindustani musicians such as Ustad Shahid Parvez Khan, Sri Debasish Bhattacharya, Vidushi Kala Ramnath, Ustad Murad Ali, Pandit Pravin Godkhindi. These jugalbandhis are a treat to the audiences, since Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi blend seamlessly with the Hindustani idiom while staying true to their Carnatic identity.

Vijayalakshmi's efforts in collaboration include *Violin-Venu-Veena*, a concept pioneered by her guru. She presented this in an all women ensemble in a successful tour of the USA.

Their creativity has also found expression in many poems on nature and other subjects, some of which have been tuned and presented by the duo.

Under the auspices of the Lalgudi Trust, Krishnan undertook *ViolinWise*, a path breaking offering for the string-instrument community in India, where world class training was provided by a top luthier from the USA to aspiring Indian luthiers. This has made top quality violin making and repair skills available within the country to violinists and other string instrumentalists, and is serving to address a hitherto major gap in the Indian music firmament.

Vijayalakshmi has, under her trust *Krutagnya*, conducted many events to provide a platform for young and budding violinists, and spread awareness of music among the general public.

The siblings have been using their trusts to raise funds and contribute their mite to charity.

Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi have both been honoured with many awards over the years. Notable among them are Sangeetha Choodamani from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Kalaimamani from the Tamil Nadu State Govt, Indira Sivasailam Endowment Medal

from the Indira Sivasailam Foundation and The Music Academy, National Eminence award from Sri Shanmukhananda Sabha, Mumbai. Besides, Krishnan is a recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi award.

Towards the cause of propagation of their musical lineage and bani, Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi have been teaching many young and aspiring violinists with dedication and commitment. They have also been sharing their knowledge and experience through workshops and lecture demonstrations.