

A CONCERT OF KARNATAK MUSIC

October 1, 2021

Navaratri Festival, Wesleyan University

B. Balasubrahmaniyan - voice

David Nelson - mrdangam

1. VARṆAM: NINNĒ KŌRI

Composer: Taccūr Singarācāri

Rāgam: Lalitā (C E F A♭ B c—c B A♭ F E D♭ C)

Tālam: Ādi (8 beats), Language: Telugu

Oh, Krishna, who sleeps on a snake, I cannot stand the troubles of manmatha (cupid). I have a strong faith in you, have compassion and protect me.

2. KRITI: ĒDAYYĀ GATI

Composer: Kōtīsvara Ayyar (1870-1936)

Rāgam: Calanāṭṭai (C D# E F G A# B c—c B A# G F E D# C)

Tālam: Ādi (8 beats), Language: Tamil

What refuge have I but you? My compassionate one! Son of Uma's husband (Shiva)! O bestower of boons! O hoard of goodness! Who else but you (are my refuge)! In not showing your mercy in accepting this ignorant person, are you playing a game with me? In this world only your feet are my sanctuary. For this poet Kunjaradasa who else but you (are my refuge)!

The kriti form is central in performances of Karnatak music. The texts are usually taken from Hindu devotional literature; the melodies can be performed with little improvisation, or with the entire range of improvisatory treatment.

3. KRITI: VĒṆUGĀNA LŌLUNI

Composer: Tyagaraja (1767-1847)

Rāgam: Kēdāragaula (C D F G B♭ c—c B♭ A G F E D C)

Tālam: Rūpakam (3 beats), Language: Telugu

We need a thousand eyes to absorb the beauty and grace of Sri Krishna, who is so fond of playing on the flute. Like charming ladies with tresses decorated with fragrant flowers around which honeybees hum. Wave before him Saffron water to ward off the effects of the evil eyes. This youth of surpassing beauty is the cynosure of a grand procession. Women of ravishing beauty precede Him, dancing together to diverse rhythms. Now and then they glance at Him shyly through the corner of their eyes and move on singing sweetly in parrot-like voices. The host of celestials watch from above in reverent homage, this magnificent spectacle of extraordinary grandeur!

This piece will be preceded by an *alapana* and followed by *niraval* and *svara kalpana* improvisation. (See item 5 for explanations of the improvisational forms)

4. KRITI: VIDHI ILLĀRKKU

Composer: Anai-Ayyavu Brothers (1800 - 1832)

Rāgam: Kharaharapriya (C D E♭ F G A B♭ c—c B♭ A G F E♭ D C)

Tālam: Rūpakam (Slow 3 beats), Language: Tamil

For those who are not destined, the grace of Lord Siva is unattainable even if they desire. O lord of Tiruvaiyaru (five rivers)! You offer wealth and boons to the deserving. By surrendering to Lord Siva, one will attain a blissful state and be rid of the chain of past karmas.

5. KRITI: BHAJARĒ RĒ CITTA

Composer: Muthusvami Dikshitar (1775-1835)

Rāgam: Kalyāni (C D E F# G A N c—c B A G F# E D C)

Tālam: Cāpu (Fast 7 beats), Language: Sanskrit

Oh mind, worship goddess Balambika who is like wish-fulfilling divine *kalpalatika* creeper. Her lotus feet are capable of bestowing vision of her full form. She is shining like the rising sun; she is auspicious and eternal; she is a consort of Siva and embodiment of *Vedas* emanated from *Brahma's four heads*. She pervades the entire universe created by God Kameswara. Worship her who is personification of *mantra* born of *Śakti*. She is delighted by Raga, bhava and tala, and she is a mother of God Muruga.

This piece will be preceded by *rāga ālāpana* (melodic improvisation in free rhythm) by the voice and violin. The drum is silent during this section. The *ālāpana* will be followed by the composition; it is here that the drum enters. The composition will be followed by *niraval*, an improvisation in which one line of text is elaborated with melodic variations of gathering intensity. *Niraval* is followed by *svara kalpana*, a melodic and rhythmic improvisation using the same line of text as a point of return. After the climax of the *svara kalpana*, the drummer will play a solo called *tani āvartanam*. He will develop various rhythmic ideas, mixing composition and improvisation. An important feature of the *tani* is the cadential design; at several points a simple or elaborate figure is stated three times, resolving at a specified point in the cycle. It is at this point that the voice and violin will rejoin the drummer to finish the song at the end of the *tani*.

6. JĀVAḶI: SMARASUNDARĀNGUNI

Composer: Dharmapuri Subbarayar (19th century)

Rāgam: Paras (C E F G A♭ B c—c B A♭ G F E D♭ C)

Tālam: Adi (8 beats), Language: Telugu

Who is equal to (him who is) as beautiful as cupid? Among the multitude of gentlemen, he is a Prince! For words uttered, (he) does not speak obstructively, (he) does not stare at any lady! Playing Vina and singing in a pleasing way to the ears, (he) proclaims “sabash” meaning bravo.

7. TILLĀNA

Composer: Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar (1860 - 1919)

Rāgam: Pūrṇachandrikā (C D E F G A G c—c B G F D E F D C)

Tālam: Ādi (4+2+2 beats)

Language: Telugu

Borrowed from bharata natyam, the tillana is a lively ending piece with minimal text. Its text is mainly composed of *śolkattu* (rhythmic syllables) that would be expressed by the dancer's movements.