

Givers and Takers

Many in attendance today at the 24th celebration of Chicago Tyagaraja Utsavam have been present on numerous previous years; others, their numbers growing rapidly, are here for the first time. For a widening core of patrons and their families, this day is evolving into a high watermark by which they measure the joy and excitement of all other days of the year. Such is the appeal of the Utsavam. We see here a pair of senior citizens, meeting after decades, reminiscing about old friends, and there a group of mothers holding forth on the latest exploits of their young offspring. Groups of teenagers are gathering and regrouping, giggling and chattering. Toddlers and youngsters are everywhere in a blur of motion. This is the brick and mortar appearance of the Utsavam; but at its foundation is our profound aspiration to celebrate the glory of our heritage. We do it through our music, in the name of Saint Tyagaraja.

To Tyagaraja, *Rama bhakti* (devotion to Rama) was sacred, *sangita jnanamu* (knowledge of music) was sacred. Though it was far from his *swabhava* to install himself on a pedestal as a moral preceptor, his society elevated him on to it. His peers made him a legend in his own time. Tyagaraja's work and message flow from our culture. Celebrating his memory helps us to preserve and share the values he represented. This is the reason for the Utsavam.

The Utsavam takes its lead from the original, *the Tyagaraja Aradhana* observed in Tiruvaialur, India, which was first celebrated in the early 1900's. Our Utsavam is kept faithful to South Indian traditions and customs, while allowing for meaningful changes. One such shift is the predominant place given to the younger generation. By providing a well attended platform to perform on CTU reaches out to children, students, amateurs and teachers and encouraging them to learn and participate in this art.

Givers and Takers

For months ahead, a few core volunteers work countless hours, planning and organizing. What kind of people are these? They are folks just like you – with regular day jobs, with families and with kids that need to be driven to soccer practices, violin recitals, and SAT classes. It is a matter of give and take. We appeal to all – especially the younger families – to be Givers as much as they are Takers.

Last Year's Programs

From the 1999 Utsavam to the present, CTU staged ten programs of diverse nature, including the 1999 festival, eight classical concerts and a Bharata Natyam dance program. The Utsavam started on Saturday, May 29, with a chant of Vishnu Sahasranama. A chorus of 65, including 35 children then performed the Pancharatna kritis. Amateurs and local professional artists dedicated the rest of the day, to brief renderings of Tyagaraja's compositions. A Bharata Natyam Dance

was offered by Natyakalalayam Dance Company, specially choreographed for the Utsavam by Hema Rajagopalan, based on the kriti Gana Murthe (Gana Murthi). The second day's (May 30) program started with a concert by Charumati Ramachandran (vocal), accompanied by Embar Kannan (violin) and K.S. Sivakumar (mridangam). Abhishek Raghuram (vocal) followed this, supported by Jayshankar Balan (violin) and Anand Ananthakrishnan (mridangam). It is notable that Abhishek was only 14 years old and Anand, just 12 at the time. On May 31, three concerts were staged as follows. The first concert was by T.M. Krishna (vocal) with Anantha Krishnan (violin) and Padmashri Palghat R. Raghu and Anand (mridangam). The second concert was by R. Prasanna (Guitar) with N. Ramakrishnan (mridangam) and N. Radhakrishnan (ghatam). The final concert was by Sudha Ragunathan, with K. Sivaraman (violin), T. Vaidyanathan (mridangam) and R. Raman (muharsing).

On June 20, 1999 CTU, along with SAPNA and the Chinmaya Mission, organized a *Jugalbandhi* concert featuring Dr. L. Subramaniam with Carnatic style violin and Pundit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt playing shastriya sangeet on mohana veena. The accompaniments were Kamalakar Rao (mridangam) and Swapan Chaudhuri (tabla). Many international musicians joined L. Subramaniam and performed fusion music. This concert was held at Chicago Orchestra Hall.

On June 27, 1999, CTU in association with Sri Venkateswara Swami (Balaji) Temple, Aurora, IL, organized a vocal music concert by T.M. Krishna with Srikant Venkataraman (violin) and Rohan Krishnamurthy (mridangam) as accompaniments. On September 26 1999

we had a concert by O.S. Thiagarajan (vocal) with M.G Chandaramouili (violin) and J. Vaidyanathan (mridangam).

All concerts were audiotaped professionally.

Press Reports

The Utsavam events were reported in Indian Reporter (Chicago) of June 4, 1999, India Tribune (Chicago) of June 12, 1999 and The Hindu (Madras, India) dated June 11, 1999.

Make-up Session

On March 18, 2000 CTU arranged a special afternoon of music by some teachers and amateurs who did not get a chance at the May 1999 Utsavam day. About 17 participants rendered Tyagaraja's kritis.

Sahasranama by Children

Children have been participating in the CTU Sahasranama chant for many years. This year a large group of children will chant *the poorvabhaga slokas* all by themselves, without the adults joining them. Many of them will do it without looking at a book (some because they are too young to read yet). E.G. Nadhan, the teacher, has reason to be proud.

In This Issue

In *Tyagaraja and Bhakti Dynamics*, W.J. Jackson discusses *bhakti*, with its tranquil internal aspect and the external adoration that pours out like water from a dam burst. T.N. Bala tells us how a sketch by his student kindled his thoughts towards Sri Rama's accepted image. Carnatic musicians, like everyone else, can, and should use sales props, says T.E.S. Raghavan in *Marketing Carnatic Music*. Bangalore Sureshwara points out the role of upbringing and environment

with examples, in *Nature and Nurture in Ramayana*. What is the place of lyrics in music – S. I. Krishnamachari tries to answer in *Is Sabitya Important to Music*. Aparna (10) and Kavita Ramakrishnan (13), Kaushik (15) and Shobhana (12) Gopalakrishnan, Srikanth Ravindran (13), Shuba and Madhu Sadagopan and Vikram Raghavan (14) have submitted sketches. Cartoons (this year's theme: *Old Times*) are by MKS.

Thanks

Illinois Arts Council, Lucent Technologies and Nalco Foundation have

provided valued funding assistance. Indumati Krishnamurthy provides the artful cover page illustration. The Ganesa illustration on the inside cover is from Savita Sahgal. We thank one and all.

Numerous families (see page 7 for names) have provided the wonderful South Indian home cooked utsavam feast. These volunteers and contributors honor the memory of the Saint by their service.

- Technical Editor



Bhagavatar! *Sukra dasa* is in full swing! *Prayana prapti* is there. You are singing at CTU this year!

