

ARUNA SAIRAM

What others have to say

J. VAIDHYANATHAN

My association with Aruna Sairam goes back a long way—to the early 1990s. One day she called me, introduced herself and graciously asked me if I would consent to accompany her on the mridangam in her concerts. She then invited me to France for a production by French theatre director Dominique Pompougnac on Lord Krishna, titled *Le Bebe Bleu* (The Blue Baby). It was the story of Krishna from his birth until he was five years old, in a song-dance-speech format. After that tour, I accompanied her in a concert at the Mylapore Fine Arts Club in Chennai which was a resounding success. I was amazed at the crowds and the response to this concert. Thereafter, I became her regular co-artist. Ghatam Karthick and I have accompanied her on several performances and tours.

Aruna Sairam has a fine repertoire of rare padams and javalis, a variety of complex classical compositions and pallavis, apart from the abhangs that she has come to be known for. She is an artist who understands the proscenium and the audience thoroughly and pays fine attention to detail. An expert in concert planning, she presents every concert with dedication and honesty, never once shortchanging the organisers, the audience or us accompanists.

Her ability to handle any situation on and off the stage and her rapport with everyone—from the mikeman to the chief organiser is something worth emulating. She treats all of us with respect and is ever helping and giving in nature. Open to learning new things, she makes an effort to approach people and learn from them. When my wife Poorna Vaidhyathan was seeking financial support for some of her students in the college at Tirupati, Aruna instantly sponsored six deserving students and helped procure violins for their further learning. She is a fine human being, generous in paying her co-artists and treats them with grace and equality. She calls each one of us to specifically tell us how we embellished her concert that day.

Aruna Sairam is a “Carnatic sangeetam superstar” and I am happy to have been associated with her.



At the Music Academy with (L to R): J. Vaidhyathanathan (mridangam), S. Karthick (ghatam) and Vittal Rangan (violin)

GHATAM S. KARTHICK

I have been a part of Aruna Sairam’s favourite performing team for several years and have had many magical musical moments. She is an adorable, artistic, human being. Her impeccable respect for her elders and gurus, her strong musical persona and presentation, her calm temperament, determined intelligence, open mindedness, clarity of vision—all make her a “Carnatic rockstar”.

Many experiences both on and off the stage have convinced me that she is an inspiration to the next generation of music lovers. Her major contribution is that she has brought in a new generation of enthusiastic rasikas into the fold of Carnatic music. I have heard people telling me personally that they have started listening to other concerts after listening to Aruna Sairam.

Her concert is akin to a celebration with entertaining, enlivening and elevating moments. Accompanying her on the ghatam, I have seen from a vantage point on stage, how the audience gets into a blissful state during her concert. She draws in her listeners with her charismatic, booming voice, clear diction, her interaction with co-performers, moving anecdotes, hilarious tidbits, historical references, and musical snippets which make them feel that they are sitting with us on stage. She is an awesome performer with an endearing demeanour, which makes her a truly special artist.

Apart from time-tested masterpieces, Aruna Sairam has a large repertoire of classy padams, javalis, rare kritis and a good knowledge of many languages. She has been instrumental in creating an interest in children to learn and perform nama sankeertanam, abhangs and bhajans.

Several times she has made me feel emotional and humble by openly acknowledging in public, even my smallest part in enhancing her concerts, something that needs a big heart. It is the same with all other co-artists who share the stage with her. Her affection and concern towards our stay, food and comfort make every occasion a memorable experience. ■

Aruna’s sartorial sense

A singer has to pay attention to her aharya pretty much like a dancer, though to a lesser extent. Presentation and presentability are important. Aruna has the ability to appear well co-ordinated on stage—be it her saree, jewellery, nail art, hairdo—every element is well set and fine tuned. She has ‘patented’ her blouse with the embroidery of the swaras ‘sa pa sa’. Her joy de vivre is infectious and she takes care of every facet of her personality with great involvement and happiness.

SIVAPRIYA KRISHNAN