

THE LALGUDI SIBLINGS (part 2)

Complementing each other

Besides playing as a duo, both of you have been accompanists too. What is it to accompany vocalists and other instrumentalists on stage? (Vijayalakshmi continues to provide accompaniment in concerts, Krishnan stopped a long while ago.)

Krishnan : On the occasion of Vinayaka Chaturthi I accompanied Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer in 1988 at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, and T.N. Seshagopalan in another concert. I have accompanied N. Ramani, Mandolin U. Shrinivas, D.K. Jayaraman, Voleti Venkateswarlu, and S. Ramanathan, besides other eminent artists. When I stopped accompanying, Semmangudi remarked humorously, “Your Appa divorced me, now you too have done so!”

There came a time when I had to make a choice between continuing as an accompanist and being a solo artist. The more I accompanied, the more I was viewed as one, and lesser were the chances of being taken seriously as a soloist. Several violinists were emerging as accompanying artists. Accompanying gives you a varied creative challenge, but I had to take a conscious call to move away. I could not accompany some and say no to others. So I moved on with the firm belief



that I could sustain being a solo artist, despite many invitations to provide accompaniment. Also nowadays, the combination of artists on stage that mattered once, no longer holds good. For example, Alathur-Lalgudi-Mani, KVN-Lalgudi-Mani were among the combinations that drew huge crowds. I feel the main artist alone has come to prominence centrestage. I consider it an achievement to be able to sustain as a solo performer.

Viji : I continue to be an accompanist and pick and choose my concerts.

My accompanying stint began with O.S. Thyagarajan, at a function in Vittal Ramamurthy’s house. I have accompanied a variety of artists ranging from Mani Krishnaswami, R. Vedavalli, T.N. Seshagopalan, Sudha Ragunathan, Aruna Sairam, Gayatri Venkatraghavan, Malladi Brothers, Abhishek Raghuram, Sriram Gangadharan, Kunnakudy M. Balamuralikrishna, T.N.S. Krishna, and Ashwath Narayan among several others. My focus is on solo/duo, but I do enjoy the challenges of accompanying different artists and the creative challenges it presents.

Krishnan: Accompanying a high-pitched voice on the violin is not easy and Viji has been doing it quite successfully.

Pancharatnam in Muscat. Maharajapuram Santhanam and Ramachandran (vocal), Lalgudi Jayaraman and Krishnan (violin), N. Ramani (flute) and Vellore Ramabhadran (mridangam)



In conversation with
Sivapriya Krishnan