

Merging parallels

Every country, sometimes every region in a country, has its own style of music. Such exposure to varied genres of music during her Masters and Post Masters Fellowship studies at Berklee College of Music, led to the growth of Apoorva Krishna's fascination for the concept of chords and the realm of harmonies in Western music. Though her basic interest is Indian classical music, this exposure led her to create fusion of Indian classical and contemporary Western music. Apoorva is an accomplished violinist belonging to the Lalgudi school, and her recent composition *Merging Parallels* has been garnering international attention. Several eminent artists like John McLaughlin, Aruna Sairam, Bombay Jayashree, Ranjani-Gayatri and Abhishek Raghuram, and her gurus Anuradha Sridhar, Srimathi Brahmanandam, among others, have expressed their appreciation. Says John McLaughlin, "I've been involved with musicians from India and Indian music for the greater part of my life and one of the fascinating aspects I have experienced is the attempt to integrate harmony into the Indian traditions. Now we have this young generation of the 21st century and they are studying Western music—in particular, harmony. This music video from Apoorva and Varijashree is amazing on how they are integrating harmony into the melody, with the sophisticated rhythms of India; and it's really an amazing piece of music, really quite outstanding."

Something a young aspiring violinist would only have dreamt about came true for Apoorva Krishna when, in November 2019, two legendary maestros John McLaughlin and Zakir Hussain invited her to play the famous Shakti masterpiece *Lotus*



Apoorva Krishna

Feet at the Harvard Business School, organised by the Berklee India Exchange. Since then McLaughlin's encouragement has led her efforts towards merging the music of East and West.

The Lalgudi tillanas have had a great fascination for her with their melodies and rhythms; they were the muse for her to compose five tillanas, and the debut album *Apoorva Tillanas* was released during the Cleveland Aradhana festival in 2018. Apoorva says, "With my love for Carnatic tillanas and Western harmonies, *Merging Parallels* came to life. The piece relates to

the concept of adhara sruti bheda ragamalika, which means different ragas over different srutis and tonics—like the world of different modes over different keys and chord changes".

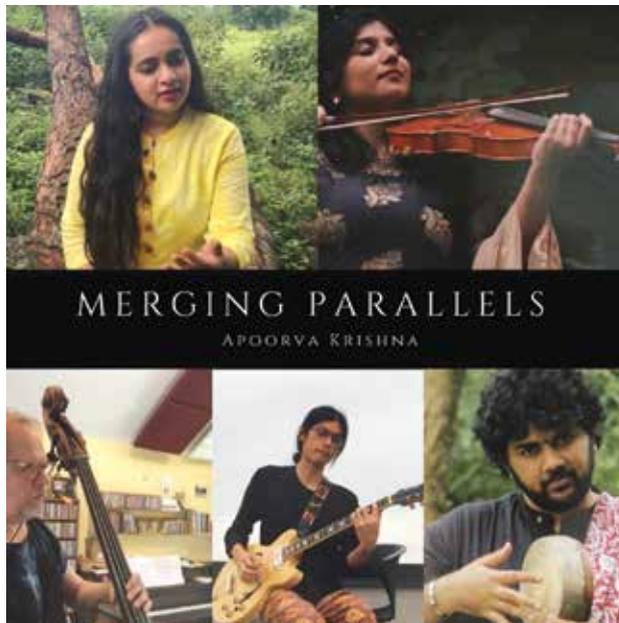
Adapting, transposing and improvising over chord changes and different styles of playing, besides the strong difference between Indian classical tuning and the Western standard tuning, posed a big challenge that Apoorva had to take on. It was her abiding passion for music and the exposure to different genres of music, along with her training from understanding teachers, that gave her the courage to continue with the venture of composing melodies with Indian classical ideas with chord changes. *Merging Parallels* was a natural corollary that has won her great acclaim.

Merging Parallels runs for 3.15 minutes and is set to khanda Chapu tala with ateeta eduppu. It contains 18 ragas with chord changes and is set aesthetically, abiding by the tillana format, patterns, mathematical jati prayogas, as well as a lyrical

(L to R): Apoorva, John McLaughlin and Zakir Hussain in *Lotus Feet*



section in Sanskrit in the raga Saramati. Apoorva has been fortunate to have had other artists joining with her in this production, which has added to its musical value. Varijashree Venugopal, with a clear passionate voice, has rendered vocal support; the versatile Sunaad Anoor has brought forth his creativity with percussions like konnakol and khanjira enhancing the rhythmic aspects of the tillana. Apoorva adds, “Aleif Hamdan’s magical colours, chords and love for Indian classical music paved the way for seamless transitions, rhythmic synchronisation and rock-solid harmonic support. The double bass support by Bruno Raberg has enhanced the total effect immensely.” All the musicians have played from their own homes due to the



pandemic situation; nonetheless the coordination is completely seamless.

Apoorva has been part of several collaborations with both Indian and Western musicians. Shankar Mahadevan’s composition *Ragamaya*

is a fusion of Indian classical music conceptualised with graha bhedam with contemporary arrangement. *Essence* is a recent electronic track produced by Atmanam, where Apoorva plays the violin; it was shot in the heart of New York and it has been popular on Spotify. *Transcend* has William Cepeda, the creator of Puerto Rican jazz and a four-time Grammy nominee; this is a collaboration of Indian classical music and Latin jazz styles.

There are some very recent works yet to be released, with her playing the violin, which have influences of various musical genres such as Flamenco, Latin jazz, Polish jazz, Western classical, Electronic, Bluegrass, Iranian and hip-hop.

V. KARPAGALAKSHMI