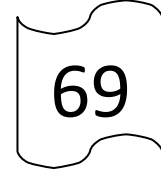


Thrissur C Rajendran an Eminent Violinist & Composer from Kerala

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Abstract

Numerous outstanding composers and their compositions were the backbone of Carnatic Classical Music. The bhava or essence of the many hundreds of ragas that are popular in Carnatic Music now were established by composers through their compositions, which was an important contribution to the growth of the field. The composer's communicated their ideologies and bhakti rasa through Music. Majority of the Carnatic Music composers are Vaggeyakaras, which means that they contributed both Music and lyrics themselves.

Among these tremendous composers the contributions of Kerala composers are also remarkable. one of the composer is Thrissur C Rajendran, a renowned Violinist from Kerala, who composed many compositions in Carnatic Music.

This article is a research work to discuss Thrissur C Rajendran's contributions to Music.

These are all the main points that are going to be revealed in this article:

- Kerala composers
- Thrissur C Rajendran
 - Born
 - Education
 - Violin
 - As an accompanist and solo performer
 - AIR staff artist
 - As a composer

Keywords: Kerala composers, Thrissur C Rajendran, Violinist, Composer, Compositions

Introduction¹

Kerala has a vibrant cultural heritage and classical music has always been significant. Carnatic music is core in the part of Kerala musical culture. Swati Tirunal, the king of Travancore, gave Kerala a place in the world of Carnatic Music. Swati Tirunal was a great musician and composer, who contributed immensely in the field Carnatic Music and popularized the Carnatic Music or the classical Music of South India in Kerala. Because of that his period is considered as 'Augustan age of Kerala Music'

Swati Tirunal invited many musicians from other states to his Darbar in Travancore. So many musicians accepted the invitation of the king and quickly made **Travancore as Seat of Music**. The Thanjavur brothers, Chinnaya, Ponnayya, Sivanandam and Vadivelu – the pupils of Muthuswami Dikshitar, was the imperative once in this musicians list. Vadivelu encouraged Swati Tirunal to experiment with the Violin in Carnatic Music and assisted him in the composing. After extensive analysis and study, Swati Tirunal was persuaded and gave the status Violin as one of the primary



accompaniments in Carnatic concerts.

Many Tyagaraja disciples arrived Travancore in this time and hence Tyagaraja's kritis were gained popularity in Kerala. Many stalwarts in Music who benefited the patronages from the king Swati Tirunal included, Shatkala Govinda Marar, Iravi Varman Thambi, Cholapuram Rangunatha Iyer and Parameswra Bhagavathar. This period considering as a golden era of Carnatic Music in Kerala. Many endowed composers are in that period like, Iravi Varaman Tambi, Shatkala Govinda Marar, Rukmini Bayi Tamburati, Palaghat Parameshwara Bhagavathar, Kuttikunju Tangachi and Neelakanta Sivan, contributed much to the field of Music.

Many other composers also flourished in the history of Carnatic Music in Kerala, though made important contributions to the history of Carnatic Music in Kerala. The composers like, T. Lakshmana Pillai, Atoor Krishna Pishrody, K.C Kesava Pillai, Kuttamuthu Kunju Kurup, Ennapadam Venkataramana Bhagavathar, Thamasseri Krishna Bhattathri, C.S Krishna Iyer, Laitha Dasar(T.G Krishna Iyer), Puthukode Krishnamurthy, M.D. Ramanathan, N.P Ramaswami, Kilimanur Koyi Tampuran, Dr. Gopalakrishnan, P.K Sankaranaryan and Tulasivanam are some notable persons in the list.

There are also some talented living instrumentalists from Kerala in this generation, made a foot print in composing and composed many Carnatic compositions. But these composers' compositions are not yet propagated much including, B. Sasikumar, Trissur C Rajendran and A. Ananthapadmanabhan etc.

One of them, Thrissur C Rajendran, is a prominent violinist, who has composed several compositions in Carnatic Music. His life and contributions in Music is going to be discussed in this article.

Thrissur C Rajendran²

In the scene of Carnatic Music in Kerala, the name Thrissur C Rajendran is obligatory. Thrissur C Rajendran is a well-known violinist, who contributed much in the field of Music. Through the strings of the violin, he won over listeners from all across the Carnatic Music world. The focus of C Rajendran is to use music to bring out the essence of a raga or enhance the bhava.

Along with demonstrating his prowess as a violinist, C Rajendran also established himself as a composer. He is a prolific composer who composed more than hundred compositions, it includes Carnatic compositions, Devotional songs, Lullabies, Light music songs, Patriotic songs, Poems, and Musical screenplays.

Birth

Thrissur C Rajendran was born at Kunnankulam, Thrissur district, Kerala in 1949 in a culturally rich family.

Family

C Rajendran's father Venugopala Raja was a Lecturer in Poly Technique College at Kozhikode and also had very much interest in Music. His mother Smt.Sarojini Raja, was a talented singer and Veena player. C Rajendran's younger brother Thrissur C Narendran was a great Mridangam artist and one of his sister Prema Balachandran also an excellent vocalist in Carnatic Music.

His grandfather Sri. Mankulam Valya Kunjuni Raja was a great person who wrote some



books composed some compositions too. He was a great follower of Music and was originally set up the idea to start Kerala Kalamandalam, the deemed to be university of Arts and culture in Kerala.

C Rajendran was married to Smt. Maya Devi and has two children, Son Krishna Prasad and daughter Krishna Priya.

Education

C Rajendran did his primary education in Velayil, Kozhikode and finished his schooling in different schools at Kunnankulam. He finished his pre-degree studies at Guruvayur and shifted to Kolkata for a job and completed his UG studies from there as a part time student. He is a graduate holder in Bachelor of commerce.

Violin

C Rajendran started leaning Violin at the age of twelve under the guidance of Sri. David Bhagavathar. In a short period of time, under the adept tutelage of his guru and with rigid practice, C Rajendran became a top ranking violinist.

As an accompanist

C Rajendran started his journey as a violinist at the age of 15 by giving accompaniment to his sister's concert. From that time he accompanied almost all topmost musicians in Carnatic Music in all the three generations. He accompanied the leading figures in Carnatic Music like, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, D K Jayaraman, M. Balamuralikrishna, T K Govindarao, R K Srikantan, K V Narayanaswamy, Nedunuri Krishnamurthy, T V Gopalakrishnan, Madurai G.S Mani, T N Seshagopaln, T V Sankaranarayanan and many other eminent artists. He also accompanied many next young generation famous vocalists from Madras too.

C Rajendran was a most demanding violinist in 80's and 90's in Kerala and he accompanied almost all famous Carnatic musicians from Kerala. He accompanied for the famous Kerala artists like, Dr. K.J Yesudas, Neyyattinakar Vasudven, Mangad Natesan, Puthukode Krishnamurthy, Thrissur C Ramachandran, Pala C K Ramachandran and many next generation vocalist.

C Rajendran is not only gave accompaniment for vocal concerts but also accompanied for many instrumental concerts of very talented instrumentalist like Dr. N. Ramani(Flute), Selam Deshayyar(Veena), U Srinivas(Mandolin), Kadri Gopalnath (Saxophone), Thiruvizha Jayashankar (Nadaswaram) and A.K.C Natarajan(Clarinet) etc.

C Rajendran continuing his journey as an accompanist and many vocalist now also demanded him for an accompaniment in their concerts.

As a leading performer

C Rajendran gave many solo Violin concerts in several prominent Music Sabas in all over India and abroad. He performed many duet concerts with son Krishna Prasad and also performed trio violin concerts with his colleagues. He also performed in some special concerts like Veena-Venu - Violin Sangamam.

Playing techniques³

He developed his known playing technique in Violin from his guru and also through the wide range of experience he gathered by accompanying stalwarts of Carnatic Music. Raga bhava is the



center of attraction in his playing.

As a staff artist in AIR

C Rajendran started working in AIR as a staff violinist in 1975. It marked a turning moment in his professional life. His first appearance on AIR was by accompanying the legendary artist Palakkad K V Narayanaswamy. He performed many solo performances as well as accompanied a number of well-known musicians in AIR. He performed many AIR National programmes in all over India.

C Rajendran served AIR as a programme coordinator, music composer, lyricist, broadcaster etc. He contributed much to AIR as a composer, composed some Carnatic compositions, several light music songs, and Patriotic songs, Poems, Songs for featured programmes and also one Musical drama. He contributed lyrics for many programmes in AIR and also tuned some writer's songs too.

After a 34 years of service, he retired from AIR in 2009 as 'A' top graded artist in Violin.

Carnatic Music compositions⁴

Like a renowned violinist Lalgudi Jayaraman, C Rajendran composed many prolific Carnatic compositions. He composed 60 above Carnatic compositions, in all forms like, Varna, Krti, Ragamalika, Pada, Tillana, Bhajan and Mangalam. A Varna in the raga Bridavana Saranga was his debut composition. After retirement C Rajendran focused entirely on composing compositions on Carnatic music. "Sri Maha Ganapathe," in the raga Gambira Natta, was the first kriti composed by him. Sanskrit is the language used in majority of his compositions. Two Malayalam kriti's were also composed by him. His songs are always exquisite blends of music and lyrical elegance. Each of his compositions is a benefit to Carnatic music and is written in accordance with his own style. He composed:

- Varna – 22
- Krti – 37
- Ragamalika – 2
- Pada – 1
- Tillana – 2
- Bhajan – 2
- Mangalam – 1

C Rajendran's compositions include variety of uncommon ragas, including Suddha Todi, Veenavadini, Subali or Shekara Chandrika, Shivashakti, and Ganavaridi, and as well as some uncommon talas, including Khantajathi tiruputa and Sangeerana chapu. He also composed some Hindustani ragas like Binnashadj, Kalavati, and Mishra Shivananjini. Each of his composition are the mixture of raga bhava, tala and with attractive lyrics.

Raga innovations⁵

'Hariharapriya' (janya of 22nd Mela Kharaharapriya) and 'Mayavathi' (janya of 22nd Mela Kharaharapriya) are two new ragas that created by C Rajendran and he wrote a Varna and a Kriti in the ragas Mayavathi and Hariharapriya, respectively.

CD's and Albums

The seven compositions by C Rajendran on Lord Ayyappa that were featured in the



album 'Swamy Ayyappan' issued by Manorama Music. Two songs on the CD 'Thrippuka' on Lord 'Vadakumnathan' that he wrote and composed the music.

Foreign performances

As a violin soloist and accompanist, C Rajendran performed many different countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, Africa, UK, Sri Lanka and all Gulf countries. During the 50th anniversary celebration, he attended as the cultural ambassador in the UNESCO hall in Paris.

Awards and recognitions

C Rajendran has won numerous honors and recognitions, including, the Best young violinist award by Madras Music academy in 1979 and the Kerala Sangeet Nataka academy award in 2006. He has also won many other significant awards from well-known Sangeetha Sabhas and organizations.

Conclusion

Among the great composers in Carnatic Music and their compositions, the contributions of many modern composers to Carnatic Music is also remarkable. These composers' compositions also need to be popularized more and widely staged. Thrissur C Rajendran is such a talented composer, whose compositions are required to be propagated. Each of his compositions is an asset to Carnatic Music.

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