



9TH ST. LOUIS INDIAN MUSIC FESTIVAL



May 19th & 20th, 2023
Mahatma Gandhi Center, Ballwin, MO, USA

A festival to celebrate Indian
Classical Music

Presented by
Soorya Performing Arts



UPCOMING PROGRAMS

JUNE 11th, 2023—Annual Dance Show with Live Music

JUNE 17th, 2023—Swamy Sharanam Ayyappa Directed by Guruji

SWAMY SHARANAM AYYAPPA

DIVINE DANCE DRAMA



PERFORMED BY SOORYA PERFORMING ARTS
DIRECTION: GURUJI PRASANNA KASTHURI

JUNE 17TH, 2022
HTCC AUDITORIUM,
717 WEIDMAN ROAD,
MANCHESTER, MO 63021

PRESENTED BY
OHMKARAAM



Foreword

Dear Patrons

We are delighted to bring the 9th Saint Louis Indian Music festival to our great city of Saint Louis, MO.

This music festival brings out the nuances of the Indian classical styles Carnatic and Hindustani in an attempt to blend beautifully with Jazz and new-age standards. We are very happy to have veteran Veena player D Balakrishna from India presenting majestic music on ancient instrument—Veena.

Carnatic music practitioners Seema Kasthuri and World Music Guitarist—Farshid Etniko aim to jam and improvise along with the talented band members Ethirajan Ramanujam, Prasanna Kasthuri, Balaji Sivasubramanian, Ben Coen, Gabe Bonfill, Ramesh Charupalla, Subbaram Kameshwaran.

St. Louis's veena teacher—Nithya will present with her students. Young musicians—Priya Kanna, Samanvita Kasthuri, Akshara Sriram will present their melodious music on stage. More than 50 young students will participate in American Sangeeth Idol competition

Thank you to our volunteers who worked to make it happen. We sincerely thank Vinod Shenoy, Prasanna Narasimha for taking care of sound system.

We thank Missouri Arts Council and Regional Arts Commission for supporting this event. We sincerely thank many corporate matching grants for our organizations, who made it possible for this event. We thank our Soorya Family, Soorya-Friends, and donors for supporting this event. Thanks to the staff of the excellent Kirkwood Performing Arts Center.

After this show, we invite you to our upcoming 9th Saint Louis Indian Music Festival

Have fun and cheer.

Board of Directors

Soorya Performing Arts

<https://www.sooryaperformingarts.org>



DAY 1- FRIDAY, MAY 19TH, 2023

6:30 PM - Soorya Music School - Inaugural Music Show
7:15 PM - Distribution of Workshop certificates
7:30 PM -

Grand Veena Concert by Vidwan Balakrishna

Visiting artist from India

Mrudangam: Ethirajan Ramanujam / Electronic Ghatam: Prasanna Kasthuri

DAY 2 - SATURDAY, MAY 20TH, 2023

Music Competition - 10:30—3:30 PM
held in the lower level of Gandhi Center

Gandhi Center Upper level - music concerts

10:00 AM - **Purandara Smarane** - Vocal Concert by Soorya Music Students

11:00 AM - Vocal Concert by **Samanvita Kasthuri**

11:45 AM - Dance by Students of Soorya Dance Company

Noon - Vocal Concert by **Akshara Sriram**

Lunch - 1 to 2

2:00 PM - Students of **Guru Lekha Menon**, Kansas

2:45 PM - Hindustani Singing by **Radha Khare & Shreeya Khare**

3:15 PM - Veena Concert by **Nithya Sai Ganesh**

4:00 PM - Carnatic Vocal by **Priya Kanna**

4:30 PM - Coffee Break

5:00 PM

International Jazz Concert by - Farshid Ethniko & Team

6:30 PM - **Treasures of Traditional Music**

Carnatic Vocal - SEEMA KASTHURI

Accompaniment: Violin by Balaji, Mrudangam by Ethirajan Ramanujan

8:30 PM Announcement of American Sangeetha Idol Results

(Please note: Program is subject to change due to weather and travel restrictions to artists)

This festival is partially funded by

Regional Arts Commission and Missouri Arts Council

Indian Veena Artiste, par excellence

D Balakrishna



"Solemn, profound, pleasant"

- The Hindu, national newspaper of India about D. Balakrishna's Veena concert.

D. Balakrishna is a Carnatic musician who plays veena in the Mysore tradition. Mr. Balakrishna is the son and disciple of Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. Mysore V. Doraiswamy Iyengar (India's highest award-Padmabhushan Awardee) who was a Veena artiste par excellence of the glorious Mysore school of Veena playing, synonymous with the great Veena Sheshanna. He enjoys the distinction of performing as a Top Grade artiste of All India Radio and brought laurels to Karnataka by performing numerous national programs on AIR and Doordarshan.

Apart from solo concerts, he has played numerous jugalbandhis/ duets with eminent artistes namely Sangeeta Kalanidhi M Chandrashekar, Ustad Bahuddin Dagar, Pandit Rajeev Taranath and Pandit Debiprasad Ghosh to name a few. It is creditable that Sri D Balakrishna has taken the flavor of Carnatic classical music to foreign shores. As part of his father's Pancha Veena troupe he traveled to Russia in 1987. The year 1988 saw him winning a wide audience in Britain while accompanying his father. Again in the 1991 prestigious Festival of India in Germany he participated successfully in the Pancha Veena concert under his father's guidance. Balakrishna's 2002 tour of the USA was an impressive musical voyage showcasing the unique elegance of the Mysore Veena tradition. He represented the Govt. of Karnataka in the Vishwa Kannada Sammelana held in 2006 at Washington, USA and was lauded by the audience. He has given concerts at the Cleveland (U.S.A) Tyagaraja Festival in 2010 teaming with Sangeetha Kalanidhi T N Shesha Gopalan on the Veena. alakrishna was honored by President of India with Central Sangeeth Natak Akademi award in 2021.



Seema Kasthuri has been a practitioner, performer, and teacher of Carnatic (Indian) classical music for 20-plus years. She was trained by well-known teachers from India, such as Dr. Nagamani Srinath, Dr. Balasubramaniam, and Ustad Imrath Khan. Seema has performed in major cities like Toronto, Los Angeles, New Jersey, Chicago, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Columbia, Bengaluru and Saint Louis.

Seema has several music albums in classical, devotional, and contemporary genres and many music videos to her credit on youtube. She was a recipient of an artistic grant from the Regional arts commission for her project “Wind-Chyme,” a unique collection of fusion, classical, and RAP experimentation. She loves taking the contemporary approach to blending the beautiful ragas of South Indian classical music with western music.

Seema was awarded the “AKKA Idol” title at the American Kannada conference in 2012. The St. Louis community has lauded her services. She was honored by the Indian Association of Saint Louis, St. Louis Hindu Temple, Nashville Kannada Sangha, and St. Louis Sangama Association.

Seema Kasthuri collaborates with Western classical musicians. Recently she presented “Harmony in Music” with Todd Mosby, where she explored the Jazz and Carnatic Music. She also worked with Dr. David Wacyk and with UMSL’s music department. Seema is also proficient in Bharathanatyam, she has performed productions like “Gokula Nirgamana” - an Indian Opera.



Balaji Sivasubramanian

Ethirajan Ramanujam

Ethirajan Ramanujam

Ethirajan Ramanujam has been learning Mridangam, a South Indian percussion instrument, since 1992. Ethirajan had the initial training from Ramanathapuram Sri. M.N. Kandaswamy Pillai, later from Sri. Sivashankara Reddy (disciple of Sri. M.N.Kandaswamy Pillai). Currently, he is a student of Sangita Kalanidhi Sri. T.K. Murthy and Sri. Sethalopathy B Sivaraman. Ethirajan has more than 2000 concerts on his list of shows all over India and Abroad. Ethirajan also had the privilege of representing the art(Mridangam) and the state(Minnesota) during India’s Prime Minister’s visit to the US - Howdy Modi in Houston, TX, in September 2019. Ethirajan has also worked with many dance companies to support Indian classical dance.

Balaji Sivasubramanian

Balaji started their musical journey at three when he was introduced to Carnatic music. His first Guru was Sri Tirupati G Chakrapani, who developed his interests in Carnatic and many other forms of music. His next Guru, Govindapuram V Balaji, developed his interest in complex fingering patterns. His last and latest Guru, Padmashri Kalaimamani A. Kanyakumari, accepted him as a disciple and taught him the nuances and maturity of Carnatic music. She was instrumental in Balaji evolving into a wholesome musician. After a long break of almost eight years from Carnatic music, wherein he went into Western, soft jazz, funk, and world music, Balaji returned to his old passion, Carnatic music. Balaji is an avid musician; apart from violin, he is versatile in playing more than ten musical instruments.



Farshid Etniko

Through his travels, Farshid accumulated the music of the world, making it his own, weaving the variety of styles and influences together into a sound that is unique and familiar. His band, Farshid Etniko is an ensemble that performs Latin, popular Jazz standards, as well as compositions that blend Middle Eastern & Flamenco influences with Latin beats and American Blues sensibilities.

Farshid's grp was opening act for Carlos Santana, Greg Adams, Taj Mahal, Cassandra Wilson, Angelique Kidjo, Shahin & Sepehr, B 52 and Grammy nominated Flamenco Master Juan Carmona.

Farshid had the privilege to perform with world renown Grand Masters: Ustad Imrat Khan Sitar, Irish Pipes wizard Paddy Keenen, Paquito & Sandro Lorier Gypsies from France, Guitarist Alfonso S Ponticelli, and Virtuoso Artists from St. Louis MO such as Dave Black, Sandy Weltman, Carolbeth True, Phil Gomez, Willem Von Hombracht, Tom Byrne, Aaron Burlbaw with Acoustik Element, Billy Barnett, Jeanne Trevor, Etc. Today he will be accompanying with Ben Coan and Gabe Bonfili.

Ben Coan— Ben Coan is a St. Louis bassist. He graduated from SIUE with a degree in jazz performance. He has lived as a working musician and teacher in Chicago, IL, and southern China. He has given clinics/performed at Wuhan Conservatory, Shanghai Conservatory, Golden Jazz CMI, and JZ Club Shanghai. Upon

returning to St. Louis in 2017, he began performing and recording with a variety of local groups such as the Steve Davis Trio, Kendrick Smith Trio, Greg Dallas, Farshid Etniko Soltani, Hot Club of St. Louis, Washington University Big Band, and St. Louis Big Band, specializing in both upright and electric bass.

Gabe Bonfili—Gabe Bonfili is a self-taught percussionist who knows no limits in understanding and acquiring different styles. Along the way, he ventured into the more groovy and funky polyrhythmic vibes from every continent. He’s played with Samba Bom, Laka Soul, and Farshid Etniko.

Nithya Sayee Ganesha



Nithya started to learn Music at the age of 5 Under Smt. Saraswathi Ramachandran and Bharatnatyam under Smt. Sarala. She went on and pursued to learn vocal training from Shri. Ramanatha Bhagavathar and Smt. Shruthi Anand. Nithya discovered Veena under Smt. Hema Veeraraghavan has given various concerts in and around Chennai. Nithya has enjoyed performing in various Temples, Sabhas, and Events from a young age. Nithya has been performing and teaching Veena and vocal in and around St. Louis.

She will be accompanied by her son – Rohit Sayee Ganesh

Subburam Kameshwaran - Subbaram Kameswaran took initial training in Mridangam from Shri Krishnamurthy. He is currently learning under the tutelage and guidance of Shri Guru Raghavendra. He has accompanied local artists in St

Louis for the last two years.

Ramesh Charupalla - Ramesh Cherupalla is an IT Professional based in Saint Louis, MO. Married with three children. Having a great passion for music, the journey started with Carnatic violin lessons at 12 in Chennai, India. Violin teachers were Shri T.H.Gurumurthy, Shri T.Kesavalu, and Shri M.S.Anantharaman. The entry into the United States further enhanced his music life with greater exposure to performing in multiple cultural organizations like the Tamil Sangam of Missouri, Telugu Association of St.Louis, Cultural Association of South India, Sangeetha - Classical Music Organization in St.Louis, Soorya Performing Arts, Arts, and Faith St.Louis.

Lekha Menon (Kansas)

Lekha Menon was born into a family where classical music was an integral part of their daily life, whether it be regular exposure to it through daily practise and



lessons or through public performances. After starting basic lessons at the age of 6 with Veena Vidushi Professor P. Lakshmi of Trivandrum Music Academy, Lekha went on to do her Bachelors and Masters in Carnatic music from the Maharaja's College for Women, Trivandrum, securing the first rank from the University of Kerala. She was fortunate enough to be guided and tutored by Prof. Mavelikkara Prabhakara Varma, eminent musician and teacher par excellence and Sri Pala C K Ramachandran, the principal disciple of Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. Lekha did her M.Phil in Carnatic music from the University of Delhi under the guidance of Prof. T R Subramoniam and Smt Leela

Omchery.

Lekha served as a lecturer in music at the Government College, Chittor, and later as the director of Baburaj Music Academy, Calicut. Lekha is married to Dr. Rajendra Kurup and lives in Overland Park, Kansas and continues her teaching career under the banner of her music school, Vanipriya Academy of Music. Bringing with her the experience of teaching graduate and post graduate students in Carnatic music while in India, Lekha menon started Vani Priya Academy of Music in 2012 in Overland Park, Kansas. We welcome her school to Saint Louis Indian Music Festival



Priya Kanna

Priya Kanna is a melodious singer who loves music to the core. She has been trained in Carnatic music since 2012 under the guidance of Guru Seema Kasthuri. She is one of the most sought-after singers in the St. Louis region. She was invited by organizations such as Sangeetha and Anurag Music School to provide assistance. Priya completed her music arangetram in 2017. She now pursues her study at UMKC medical school and continues singing Carnatic music.

Samanvita Kasthuri

Samanvita Kasthuri has been learning Carnatic music from her mother, Seema Kasthuri, since 4 years of age. She has been giving short concerts from a very young age. Her voice is filled with joy and elation. She gave Baithak concert in 2019, one of the few online shows at the beginning of the pandemic. She helped kids learn songs in the Sangama organization as a volunteer.

Samanvita is a very well-known dancer who has won accolades and prizes. Her recent win in Desi Dance Network as the Best Dancer of 2023 has put her at the peak of her achievement as a dancer.

Samanvita composes her music for her creative dances. She learned with veteran musician Dr. Nagamani Srinath. At present, she continues her training with Dr. Balasubramaniam from Chennai.

Akshara Sriram

Akshara Sriram is 18 years old and a rising undergraduate sophomore at Nova Southeastern University Florida. She began her musical journey at the age of 5 under Guru Smt. Shubha Narayan and continued under Guru Smt. Seema Kasthuri from the age of 9. Akshara has been learning Carnatic music for over 13 years and completed her arangetram in June of 2022. She is an active singer and board member of her university's singing group NSU Fitoor and Akshara is working to create a competitive singing team within it. She also sings Western and Bollywood music in her free time and is currently exploring ukulele and songwriting.

Purandara Namana

Purandara Dasaru was a saint living in 15th-century South India. He was a social reformer and a musician. He used music as a tool for reform. His



songs have been sung for centuries. Purandara Namana is a remembrance of his service. Songs like Gajavada-na, Tamboori Meetidava, Raagi tandira, keleno hari and many more will be sung.

This show includes many of his popular songs. Sapthaka Upadhyaya, Parthiv Voleti, Pushpa Voleti, Sumithra Sankaraman, Sia Girivaru, and Nischal Mohan will participate.

Gurus Seema Kasthuri will accompany them on the keyboard, Subbu Kameshwaran on Mrudangam, and Prasanna Kasthuri on the electronic Ghatam.

Music is the universal language of mankind

Where words fail, music speaks.

If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician.

I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music.

I see my life in terms of music.

— Albert Einstein— 1879

Music Expresses

That Which

Cannot be put

Into Words and

That Which

Cannot Remain

Silent

- Victor Hugo - French Romantic writer and politician - 1885

“sangIta jnAnamu bhakti vinA

sanmArgamu galadE manasA”

O Mind, mere knowledge of music

without devotion can never lead to the right path.

- Saint Thyagaraja - One of the Trinity of Indian Music – 1767



About us

Soorya performing arts is a 501 (c) (3) organization registered in Missouri state. Its mission is to contribute to the cultural diversity and artistic excellence in the state of Missouri and across the Greater United States of America by preserving, propagating Indian Performing arts through teaching, training & performances.

In order to carry out or mission, Soorya shall:

Provide high quality training and teaching of classical and folk performing art forms such as dance, music and theater from India.

Organize high quality professional and amateur dance, music, folk, and drama performances from India.

Arrange training and cross-artistic performances through residencies in schools and colleges in the city and rural areas.

Arrange festivals, seminars, workshops and demonstrations for better enjoyment and appreciation of South Asian Performing Art form

Create innovative dance, music and theater productions in co-operation with local, state and national companies.

Award recognition to those served in performing arts.

Establish dance competitions and provide rewards/recognition for the excellence.

Work with learning disability and mentally handicapped children and provide them an enjoyment of dance and music.

Establish student scholarships and internships to foster learning of arts among young generation.

sooryaperformingarts@gmail.com / 314-397-5278



Credits

Technical Assistance: Vinod Shenoy, Prasanna Narasimhan

Master of Ceremony: Samanvita Kasthuri , Akshara Sriram,
Sowmya, Mahitha , Sumithra Sankaraman

Food : Adithya, Nithya, Prasanna Kasthuri, Soumya,
Deepthi, Kavitha, Nandini, Sumithra, Lata, Amritha

Competition: Jayashree, Srilakshmi Vishnubhotla

Ticketing: Meghana, Sudhapriya

Videographers: Sapthaka Upadhya, Akshaya Nalluri, Saanvi
Ramgounda, Hritika Malugu, Ananya Sharma

Front Cover Design—Sia Girivaru

Back Photo — Sebastian Palomino from pexels

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Kanzler, Sumithra Sankaraman, Seema Kasthuri and Prasanna
Kasthuri

Special Thanks to
Missouri Arts Council & Regional Arts Commission
for **supporting** this event



Its a long walk to reach
the peak of perfection.
We are walking joyfully,
would you like to join ??

Join our Bharathanatyam, Kathak,
Carnatic Music, or Mrudangam Classes

Age no bar....

314-397-5278
info@sooryadance.com