Saraswati’s Journey
Saraswati’s Journey

South Indian Karnatak Music in the United States

by

Joseph Michael Getter

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Middletown, Connecticut

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to Kate,
for everything

and to Lydia,
for arriving
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

APPROVAL OF THESIS FOR MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

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Contents

List of Illustrations, Tables, and Photographs viii
Compact Disc Contents xii
Acknowledgments xiii

1 Introduction: One Music, Many Meanings 1
   Questions and Approaches of the Thesis 2
   A Sketch of My Experiences of Karnatak Music 6
   Review of the Literature 15
   Overview of the Thesis 27

2 Early South Indian Musicians in the United States 29
   Indians and America: Oppression and Fascination 29
   Balakrishnan: An Early South Indian Musician in the U.S. 37
   T. Viswanathan: The First Resident Music Teacher 43
   South Indian Music and Dance at Wesleyan University 57
   Conclusions 73

3 Music Organizations of South Indians in the United States 74
   Institutions of Culture 77
   The Composers’ Day Festival 84
   Kasturi: Kannada Cultural Society of N.E. Ohio 88
   The Cleveland Tyagaraja Music Festival 92
   Conclusions 107

4 Hindu Temples in America: Key Sites of Cultural and Musical Activity 109
   The Hindu Temple as “Home” 112
   The Hindu Temple as “Stage” 129
   Conclusions 140

5 Transmission of Music and Culture by Teachers of Karnatak Music 143
   The Presence of the Teacher 147
   Shakuntala Murthy: Vocal Music Teacher 159
   Kala Prasad’s Studies and Teaching 186
   Conclusions 195
6 Complex Identities: Karnatak Music in the United States by
Other than Immigrants from India
   Being Second-Generation Indian-American 197
   Vijayasree Mokkapati: Vina Artist, World Citizen 200
   Vasanth Venkatchalam: Second-Generation, Karnatak Vocalist 214
   Non-Indian Karnatak Musicians in America 225
   Harriotte Hurie: Hindustani Vocalist 234
   Kay Poursine: Bharata Natyam Dancer 246
   Conclusions 256

7 Karnatak Fusion Music: Cross-Cultural Communications 258
   Recordings of Karnatak Fusion Music 262
   Royal Hartigan: World Music with Integrity 277
   Gregory Acker: Raising Consciousness 289
   My Tape Compositions 300
   Conclusions 304

8 Conclusions 306

Glossary 315
Bibliography 320
Discography 335
List of Illustrations, Tables, and Photographs

All photographs by the author, unless indicated in the caption below the photograph in the text of the thesis.

| Fig. 2-1 | Cover of Balakrishna’s album *Ragas: Songs of India.* | 40 |
| Fig. 2-2 | T. Viswanathan and T. Ranganathan promotional brochure cover. | 44 |
| Fig. 2-3 | The first three Swaralvi Varisa exercises. | 48 |
| Fig. 2-4 | UCLA Festival of Oriental Music and Related Arts program book cover. | 51 |
| Fig. 2-5 | Excerpt from printed standard notation for the *gitam* “Vara Veena.” | 53 |
| Fig. 2-6 | Viswanathan’s *gamaka* notation for *gitam* “Vara Vina.” | 54 |
| Fig. 2-7 | T. Ranganathan, T. Viswanathan, and L. Subramaniam promotional brochure. | 57 |
| Fig. 2-8 | Bob Brown united with old friends at Navaratri. | 61 |
| Fig. 2-9 | T. Balasaraswati concert poster. | 63 |
| Fig. 2-10 | T. Ranganathan and T. Viswanathan. | 64 |
| Fig. 2-11 | Wesleyan Navaratri poster detail, including drawing of Saraswati. | 68 |
| Fig. 2-12 | Program for M. Nageswara Rao *vina* concert, Wesleyan Navaratri. | 69 |
| Fig. 2-13 | *Nagaswaram-tavil* troupe at Wesleyan’s Navaratri. | 71 |
| Fig. 2-14 | Program book cover for Wesleyan Navaratri festival. | 72 |
| Fig. 3-1 | Number of immigrants from India to United States by decade. | 75 |
| Fig. 3-2 | CMANA mailing advertisement for a concert by Prapancham Sita Ram (flute). | 80 |
| Fig. 3-3 | Advertisement for house concert sponsored by the Chamber Music Society of Cleveland. | 82 |
| Fig. 3-4 | Women singing as a group at the Cleveland Composers’ Day festival. | 84 |
| Fig. 3-5 | Violinists performing as a trio at the Cleveland Composers’ Day festival. | 86 |
| Fig. 3-6 | Indians performing with their non-Indian students, Cleveland Composers’ Day. | 88 |
Fig. 3-7  Kasturi of Cleveland Deepavali festival program cover. 89
Fig. 3-8  Kasturi of Cleveland letterhead detail. 91
Fig. 3-9  Children singing with their mother counting tala at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana. 93
Fig. 3-10  Stage with performers and Tyagaraja shrine, and front row of audience, at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana. 94
Fig. 3-11  Ramnad V. Raghavan in his studio at Wesleyan University. 97
Fig. 3-12  Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana program cover, with the composer’s vision of Lord Rama. 99
Fig. 3-13  Audience at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana. 101
Fig. 3-14  Three students of Shakuntala Murthy sing together at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana. 105
Fig. 3-15  Program for the dance-drama Jaya Jaya Devi. 107
Fig. 4-1  Cover of the Pittsburgh Venkateswara Temple’s publication Saptagiri Vani. 111
Fig. 4-2  Aerial view of the Pittsburgh Sri Venkateswara Temple. 114
Fig. 4-3  View of the Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Hindu Temple. 117
Fig. 4-4  Middletown Satyanarayana Temple construction fundraising brochure cover. 118
Fig. 4-5  View of the Bridgewater Venkateswara Temple under construction. 119
Fig. 4-6  Advertisement for a Vedic ritual at the Hindu Temple of Calabasas, California. 122
Fig. 4-7  Lakshmi Puja, Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple. 124
Fig. 4-8  Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple Inauguration program cover. 131
Fig. 4-9  The author and Miranda Arana perform at the Tyagaraja Aradhana. 137
Fig. 4-10  Wedding of Chitra Murthy and Ratnakar, held at the Bridgewater Venkateswara Temple. 138
Fig. 4-11  Nagaswaram-tavil music at the Middletown temple. 139
Fig. 4-12  Vijayadasami Puja at the Middletown Satyanarayana Temple. 140
Fig. 5-1  Advertisements for Indian classical dance instruction. 154
Fig. 5-2  Shakuntala Murthy (vocal) and mridangam-violin accompanists. 159
Fig. 5-3  Group singing of the Pancharatna Kritis of Tyagaraja. 170
Fig. 5-4  Shakuntala Murthy (vocal) and Ramarao (violin). 172
Fig. 5-5  Shakuntala Murthy (vocal) and Muralikrishna (mridangam). 175
Fig. 5-6  Selected compositions from Shakuntala Murthy’s instruction tapes.  
Fig. 5-7  Shakuntala Murthy’s notation for the Tyagaraja kriti “Sogasujuda.”  
Fig. 5-8  Cover of S. Rajagopala Iyer’s Sangeetha Akshara Hridaya.  
Fig. 5-9  Adi tala, Rajagopala tala calculation system.  
Fig. 5-10  Selected thatthakara jathis, Rajagopala tala calculation system.  
Fig. 5-11  Jathi from Place, Rajagopala tala calculation system.  
Fig. 5-12  Insertion of karvai, Rajagopala tala calculation system.  
Fig. 5-13  Splitting of aksharas, Rajagopala tala calculation system.  
Fig. 5-14  Concert program for Kala Prasad’s performance at the Old State House, Hartford, Connecticut.  
Fig. 5-15  Tyagaraja Aradhana at the home of Kala Prasad.  
Fig. 5-16  Kala Prasad performs at the Wesleyan Indian music students’ concert.  

Fig. 6-1  Detail of cover of M. Nageswara Rao’s album The Ten Graces Played on the Vina.  
Fig. 6-2  Karnatak music at Wesleyan, with Vijayasree Mokkapati.  
Fig. 6-3  Vasanth Venkatachalam (vocal), in performance at the Wesleyan Indian music students’ concert.  
Fig. 6-4  Advertisement for Vasanth Venkatachalam’s senior recital.  
Fig. 6-5  Cassette covers of recordings of Karnatak music by Jon Higgins released in India.  
Fig. 6-6  Poster for Indian music students’ concert at Wesleyan.  
Fig. 6-7  Harriotte Hurie (vocal), accompanied by Peter Johnson (tabla).  
Fig. 6-8  Kay Poursine performance poster.  
Fig. 6-9  Bonnie Novakov-Lawlor performing Bharata Natyam.  

Fig. 7-1  Cover art for the Mandolin Srinivas and Michael Brook album Dream.  
Fig. 7-2  Mandolin U. Srinivas performing traditional Karnatak music.  
Fig. 7-3  Cover of Chaya Swamy’s cassette Apoorva Bhakti Sangama.  
Fig. 7-4  Inner sleeve art from Shakti’s album Natural Elements.  
Fig. 7-5  Cover art from L. Subramaniam’s album Indian Express.  
Fig. 7-6  Inside illustration by Sri Arts, Bangalore, from Dissidenten’s album The Jungle Book.  
Fig. 7-7  Notation for T. Ranganathan’s solkattu composition in an eleven-beat cycle.
Fig. 7-8  Notation for Hartigan and Ranganathan’s composition “Tala Vadyam.” 280
Fig. 7-9  The Royal Hartigan Ensemble conducting a workshop on the application of Karnatak and West African music to Jazz. 282
Fig. 7-10  Gregory Acker (flute) accompanying a Bharata Natyam dancer. 296
Fig. 7-11  Gregory Acker (drumming at right) and children from Spencer Elementary School, performing with the Gamelan and shadow puppets he constructed. 299
Fig. 7-12  Self portrait, collection of ambient sounds by the Ganga. 303
Fig. 7-13  Continuums of possible Karnatak fusion types. 304
Compact Disc Contents

All audio examples recorded by the author.

Track 1  “Endaro Mahanubhavulu,” Sri raga, the fifth of Tyagaraja’s Pancharatna compositions. Group performance at the Cleveland Tyagaraja festival. Waetjen Auditorium, Cleveland State University. April 6, 1996.


Duration: 24:03  Text reference, pg. 281.

Track 4  “INDIA.” Tape composition by the author. Spring, 1996.
Duration: 15:05  Text reference, pg. 300.

Track 5  “NEPAL.” Tape composition by the author. Spring, 1996.
Duration: 8:18  Text reference, pg. 300.
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First, three short scenes to set the stage: On a recent sunny Saturday afternoon at a Hindu temple in the New England region of the United States, a middle school Indian-American girl sings a song in the South Indian Karnatak style, in praise of Lord Rama. Her accompanist on the mridangam is an adult European-American man who, as a music graduate student, learned Karnatak drumming from one of the top performers from India who taught at the local university for many years. The festival in which they participate honors the song’s composer, Tyagaraja, who is regarded as a saint; the celebration resembles an annual event held at his riverbank cremation site, in a small town in Southern India where he lived over one hundred fifty years ago.

Another scene: In the Midwestern U.S., an unexpected April blizzard does not deter a small crowd of music lovers from driving downtown to hear a
vocal recital by a famous South Indian musician known as an instrumentalist. Many people in the audience are known to each another from years of involvement in Indian-American social, professional, and cultural groups. Some of them have been studying Karnatak music with local teachers who regularly host student recitals in nearby suburban homes; others learned as children in India; and a handful have learned about raga and tala in classes on Indian music theory at nearby universities—most already have an acquaintance with the music.

The final scene, like those above, is drawn from the stories of the people in this thesis: One evening in a medium-sized Southern U.S. city, a group of improvising musicians performs for a sophisticated coffee house audience that has heard few, if any, live performances of Indian music. The artists make use of drones, and drumming techniques that one of them learned in India the previous year.

Questions and Approaches of the Thesis

Today in the United States there are many performances of South Indian Karnatak music. One may find this art taught in universities and by private teachers, performed at Hindu temples and Indian-American community events, and enjoyed by many different people. In this thesis I address some questions about the establishment and development of Karnatak music in the United States. How did it come from India to America? Who brought it?
How is it performed, taught, institutionalized, and enjoyed? How is it being maintained and encouraged here? Has it changed? To answer these and other questions, I will identify, describe, and interpret the important persons, groups, events, and social networks that comprise and support Karnatak music in the U.S.

The title of this chapter, One Music, Many Meanings, a restatement of the above passage from the Rig Veda, sets the stage for an exploration of a variety of instances of Karnatak music in the United States. One Music reflects South Indian Karnatak music’s quality of being a classical art music regarded as complex, beautiful, profound, and of ancient origins. It is a systematic art music possessing identifiable elements, such as certain ragas [modes], talas [meters], and compositions; its theory, instruments, repertoire, and performance practices and styles are products of a lengthy and ongoing evolution. While great variations in the characteristics of particular performances are certainly observable and often significant, this thesis primarily regards this musical phenomenon as a single entity.

1. The Rig Veda is a body of Sanskrit religious verses composed in India between 1500-900 B.C.E. “One fire burns in many forms” has been employed as a slogan of the Society for Ethnomusicology, and is also the epigraph of David Reck’s Music of the Whole Earth, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), [xiv].
defined by musicians and audiences as Karnatak music.\textsuperscript{2}

The other part of the title, \textit{Many Meanings}, reflects the range of applications for Karnatak music in the United States: it can serve religious, social, cultural, musical, and personal purposes. Indeed, a single performance or musical event, such as a lesson or concert, may actually contain many layers of musical and cultural meanings for audiences, participants, and performers. The central focus of my thesis is on these varied meanings, and their role in the development of South Indian music in the U.S. Herein are observations regarding music teachers, music and dance students, concerts, celebrations, recordings, and institutions. Because the music of Bharata Natyam dance shares much with Karnatak music, in terms of instrumentation, style, and repertoire, I have included some accounts of it as well; and as Canada is geographically and culturally nearby,

\textsuperscript{2} Evolutionary change is certainly a part of Karnatak music. Earlier in this century, major shifts began in music and dance patronage and the identity of performers and audiences. More recent changes in Karnatak music include the introduction of new instruments (such as electric mandolin and alto saxophone), shortening of the length of concerts, and use of recording, microphones, and amplification.

However, the conservative nature of South Indian classical arts allows me to suggest that I will discuss “one music.” The genres, compositions and compositional forms, ornamentation styles, and improvisation methods are much the same as they were fifty years ago. Indeed, certain qualities and elements are essential to musicians and audiences for defining a performance as “classical South Indian music.” The changes that I write about concern how this music is re-interpreted as it becomes a part of the American scene.
there are a small number of references to events there.³

In this thesis, I offer interpretations of the significance of South Indian performing arts in the United States, to facilitate a deeper understanding of that which I have observed, participated in, and learned. I will present examples of Karnatak music concerts in the United States; Hindu religious functions with music; information about social networks and activities of an Indian diaspora in the U.S.; cases of cultural flow and transmission between India and the U.S.; and details of Indian music education systems that undergo degrees of adaptation in the U.S. I have selected examples to demonstrate such aspects of Karnatak music in the U.S.

Three interconnected sets of issues are indispensable for an understanding of Karnatak music in America: religion and tradition, migration and diaspora, and systems of music education. Religion refers to the underlying Hindu content of South Indian arts, found in song texts, teacher-student relationships, and performance contexts. Tradition refers to the conservative nature of these performing arts, and to the role of music in defining and transmitting Indian culture. Migration refers to the transnational flow of South Indian people to America over primarily the past forty years, a movement largely responsible for connecting South Indian Karnatak music

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³ Occasionally I will refer to the United States with other names, including “America,” “North America,” and “the U.S.” Karnatak music also takes several names, including “South Indian classical music” and “South Indian art music.” Some of the authors I quote use different transliterations of Indian terms; for example, some use the variant spellings “Karnatic” or “Carnatic.”
to the U.S., and also the basis of Indian immigrant subcultures in the U.S. *Diaspora* refers to the global dispersal of Indian people, and to Indian-Americans’ sense of place, home, and identity. *Music education* refers to the systematic pedagogy utilized in South Indian music and dance, the transmission of the arts and culture, and my own and others’ means of learning the arts through music and dance lessons.

This chapter includes a brief introduction to my theoretical and methodological frameworks, viewed through a sketch of my study of Karnatak music in both the United States and India. Then I will review related literature, grouped into the categories Indian religious traditions, Indian diaspora and immigration to the United States, and Indian music and dance outside of India. Finally, I give an outline of the thesis.

**A Sketch of My Experiences of Karnatak Music**

This thesis is motivated by my abiding interests in Indian culture and music, and I hope to show that the two spheres are inseparable. I have approached Karnatak music as a musician with great affinity and excitement for this expression; and as a student of South Asian culture, arts, and history. While some of the information here was gathered intentionally for this thesis, much stems from my earlier studies of Indian music in both the U.S. and India. My primary means of gaining an understanding of South Indian music has been through applied study with Karnatak music teachers. I have
also performed South Indian art music in a variety of settings, in music festivals, concerts, and community events. Another important avenue of my approach to Karnatak music has been participant-observation: I frequently attend events such as house concerts, musical “get-togethers” of students in which we each sing a work in progress, concerts in public auditoriums, festivals attended by hundreds and even thousands of people, and temple worship services and concerts. Additionally, secondary scholarly literature and Indian-American community publications such as temple newsletters have served as valuable written resources.

4 To deepen my understanding, I have recently conducted formal interviews with Karnatak musicians, thereby collecting accounts of the life stories, motivations, beliefs, goals, methods, hopes, and musical activities of some individuals who have created Karnatak music in the U.S.

A brief autobiographical sketch may be helpful in explaining my deep interest in Karnatak music. Growing up in the southern United States, I had little formal education about any Asian culture, unfortunately not a unique occurrence in United States secondary schools. At Oberlin College I planned a broader education that included studies of music, history, and philosophy from various perspectives, to fulfill my personal and professional goals. I

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first heard Indian music through recordings, a survey course on various styles of South Asian music, and a performance of Karnatak flute given by N. Ramani at my college in 1989. At the time I did not realize that he had been brought there by a network of immigrants from India who regularly bring performers to the United States; nor could I foretell that one day I would enter a relationship as a student with one of the organizers of that particular concert.

Courses on Indian religions and history, both ancient and modern, led me to study in India in 1990 in order to reach a better understanding of its culture. At that time I was struck by the intensity of my personal interaction with another culture, an exchange that possesses an immediacy and depth far surpassing my study of India in the U.S. While residing in India, as part of the university curriculum, I lived in a monastery practicing Buddhist meditation under the guidance of teachers from various nations and religious schools. This methodology, of learning by doing, was very effective in introducing students to aspects of Indian culture, and this experience eventually motivated me to undertake the applied study of Karnatak music, and to join the field of ethnomusicology. That year I also made my way to Madras [since then renamed Chennai] to hear concerts of Karnatak music during the “music season” (December-January), on a professor’s recommendation.
Upon returning to the United States, I took a semester-length group class in singing Hindustani [North Indian classical] music, utilizing a text authored by Ravi Shankar. Although he popularized Indian music in the West, I did not yet fully grasp the history of Indian music and dance education and performance in the United States at that time. I subsequently began lessons in 1993 in South Indian *kanjira* drumming with community leader R. Balasubramaniam, and shortly thereafter in Karnatak singing with Shakuntala Murthy, both of Cleveland, Ohio. I was introduced to theoretical concepts, such as *raga*, *tala*, *sruti*, and *laya*, and in my lessons I learned basic exercises, notation, performance practices, concert format, and some compositions.

My approach now is similar to five years back. I thought it best to learn about this musical system, which I found to be very beautiful, expressive, and an important component of Indian life, by the same means that Indians use: I would take lessons from a qualified teacher. I sought out an opportunity to learn about Indian music and culture from teachers and their communities. Music and culture were inseparable—or at least it seemed to me at the time that this music was inseparable from this culture. With my teachers I often discussed issues such as their experiences and lives as first-generation immigrants to the U.S. from India. I learned of community

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5. Oberlin Conservatory of Music Professor of Ethnomusicology Roderic Knight occasionally teaches an introductory course on the performance of North Indian art music, using Ravi Shankar’s *Learning Indian Music* (Fort Lauderdale: Trumaster Products, 1979).
organizations to which they belonged, and I attended and participated in many social, religious, and musical events with them. I learned of their religious and cultural practices and beliefs, and attended events with from ten participants up to fifteen hundred. I learned of the great importance that music and dance played in their lives, how they wanted very much to foster it in the United States, and how they were able to go about doing this, through lessons and festivals.

During 1994-95 I returned to Madras to study Karnatak vocal music under Neeraja Chandrasekaran. This period afforded me many invaluable formal and informal lessons, such as observing a multitude of performances from a variety of genres of music and dance, meeting many people including musicians, and witnessing aspects of culture firsthand. I developed a better understanding of performance practice, by learning compositions and attending concerts; of contexts for performance, such as Hindu temples, music research organizations, and sabhas [music and dance societies]; and of the social and professional lives of performing artists.

More recently, since 1995, I have been studying Karnatak flute with T. Viswanathan and mridangam with Ramnad V. Raghavan at Wesleyan University. These studies have developed my sense of musical style, increased my awareness of critically important musical minutiae, and brought me a new awareness of the passion of Indian music. I am learning a
remarkable and beautiful style of Karnatak music that I had not heard before, that of Viswanathan’s family. As I began to understand how Viswanathan came to the United States, I realized that his story is unique in several significant ways. Unlike many of today’s professional Karnatak musicians, he comes from a family of traditional musicians and dancers and his ancestors were celebrated court musicians since more than two centuries ago. He arrived in the U.S. well before the change of immigration laws in 1965 that subsequently allowed many to immigrate from India. His musical style and repertoire is well-known in India as a beautiful, difficult, and sublime family tradition.

Currently, I am learning Karnatak music largely outside of the previous, familiar contexts of either a city in India or an Indian immigrant community in the United States. Additionally, I have begun to teach Karnatak music at Wesleyan, forcing me to carefully consider anew my skills, roles, and goals. Most of my Wesleyan colleagues in Karnatak music study are not Indian, and none of my students has been Indian. Thus my own role in learning Karnatak music is changing, and terms such as “American” and “Indian” are less clear as I encounter more people with international or multicultural backgrounds and perspectives. Recently, I have also had more exposure to Bharata Natyam dance, as a tambura [drone] accompanist and audience
member; and I have assisted in producing concert festivals of Indian music and dance, including Wesleyan’s 1997 ten-day Navaratri celebration.

In the United States today, South Indian Karnatak music is learned and performed by people from a diversity of cultural backgrounds who have assorted motivations and goals for their involvement in Indian music. Thus some approach Karnatak music study as a means for self-discipline and improvement, while others are primarily interested in learning an interesting and complex music system. Some members of the Indian diaspora utilize elements of Indian culture, including music, to create a new subculture and identity in the United States. Others take Karnatak musical forms, instruments, and concepts and fashion from it new forms of fusion music. Each person involved in Karnatak music in the United States possesses their own unique combination of these and other purposes and motivations.

The contemporary transnational movement of people, culture, and ideas between India and the United States facilitates the subject of my study. While throughout this thesis I refer to India and its culture, this work’s aim is to look at South Indian performing arts that are brought to and developed in the U.S., by both Indians and non-Indians. Because of this international link, my learning experiences in India have greatly enriched my comprehension of events in the United States. For example, after attending the festival of the South Indian composer-saint Tyagaraja in Cleveland, Ohio,
I was able to attend the festival in Tiruvaiyaru, Tamil Nadu [a state in South India], upon which the Cleveland festival is modeled. Later, I attended other such South Indian composer festivals in Connecticut and New Jersey. In these events set in the United States, it is often the case that the source of music and meaning is found in India.

In my experience, Karnatak music events in the United States are constituted of the elements I mentioned above: religion and tradition, migration and diaspora, and systems of music education. These three sets of issues are central to an understanding of this music in America. However, it must be noted that contemporary life seems often to consist of complexities, multiple identities, and even a “fractured” sense of self, nationality, and culture. Similarly, I have observed that in each of these three sets of issues there are complexities and exceptions to any rule that my observations may suggest. Examples for each can illustrate my point. Although one person’s chief reason for involvement in South Indian art music is that it is religious, another person may not mention this factor at all, while others may actively disregard it. While Karnatak music builds on a long history and seems, at present, to tolerate little experimentation, it is nonetheless not

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6. The complexity of identity may be particularly true for those in the United States, a nation made of people from diverse backgrounds. India’s population is also very diverse, in terms of religion, lifestyle, and ethnicity, and, of course, artistic expression. Mark Slobin has contributed greatly to my understanding of the issue of identity in America; see his *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).
static—Karnatak music has changed, is changing, and will change.

Immigrant communities are often sources of South Indian music in the U.S., but many people from outside of these groups have studied and performed it. And, as a music education system, Karnatak music offers a method and pedagogy that was developed under conditions quite different from contemporary life in either the United States or India; today’s world offers serious questions about how the teaching of music can and should be accomplished.

These issues—religion and tradition, migration and diaspora, and music education—constitute my framework for interacting with, learning, performing, and understanding South Indian music and culture. My perception of these issues derives primarily from my experiences; what I have observed has directly shaped what I sense to be important. In the following section I discuss research and writing that has also made an impact on my understanding of South Indian Karnatak music in the United States.

7 While I have great affinity for the music of India, I am also interested in many other issues concerning South Asian culture that are tangential to this thesis, such as modern urban culture, colonialism and independence, other aspects of Indian diaspora studies, and the social history of music and dance. Such topics are beyond the scope of the present work but raise many intriguing problems and questions.
Review of the Literature

Sources on South Asian Religion and Tradition

The following monographs and articles are very useful in understanding the meaning, lyrics, and context of South Indian Karnatak music. Hinduism is the content and context of Karnatak music; lyrics are often in praise of a deity, such as Rama or Devi; music is often a part of Hindu temple worship services and festivals; and indeed, the practice and sound of music itself is one possible path to the goal of much of Hindu practice, moksha [liberation from the cycles of existence]. It would be impossible to grasp the meaning and role of South Indian art music in either Indian or American society without a familiarity with the information in these works.

Although Karnatak music has a specifically Hindu character and its own musical history, it is useful to have a broader overview of the milieu and historical conditions within which it has developed. Numerous works have been written on the history and culture of South Asia. Two books that

present summaries of Indian history are Stanley Wolpert’s *A New History of India* and A. L. Basham’s *The Wonder that Was India*. Wolpert presents a political history of India from the earliest period of the Indus Valley civilization up to the 1980s post-Independence period. Basham includes information gathered from art objects and ancient Sanskrit texts, covering culture, the arts, daily life, and other topics from the beginnings of Indian history to the 1500s C.E.

My understanding of Hinduism has been influenced by many sources. Thomas Hopkins’ *The Hindu Religious Tradition* clearly and concisely introduces Hinduism’s texts, tenets, and traditions. Two introductory works, Diana Eck’s *Darshan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, and Harold Coward and David Goa’s *Mantra: Hearing the Divine in India* address

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particular aspects of Hindu religious practice, such as chanting of mantra, the
use of icons of gods, offerings to images and puja, home and temple worship,
and pilgrimage. Several books assume a more sophisticated knowledge. The
edited volume Gods of Flesh, Gods of Stone includes analytical chapters on the
everyday practice of Hinduism, including processions, possession, holy men,
and puja. A concise work on complex concepts from Indian philosophy, such
as karma and moksha, that regularly appear in Karnatak music song texts is
Eliot Deutsch’s Advaita Vedanta.\textsuperscript{13} Karnatak composer Tyagaraja wrote most
of his hundreds of extant songs on Rama, a Hindu deity; Paula Richman’s
Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia explores
the multitude of ways in which Rama’s epic tale is told, through television,
stage, politics, music, and literature.\textsuperscript{14} Many translations of the epic
Ramayana itself are available, including a very readable book based on the
Tamil version by noted novelist R. K. Narayan.\textsuperscript{15} An account of the
performance and oral transmission of religious stories and knowledge in
India is Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious

\textsuperscript{13} Eliot Deutsch, \textit{Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophical Reconstruction} (Honolulu: East-West Center, 1985).

\textsuperscript{14} Paula Richman, \textit{Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia},

\textsuperscript{15} R. K. Narayan, \textit{The Ramayana: A Shortened Prose Version of the Indian Epic, Suggested by the
Teaching, by Kirin Narayan. Works by Blackburn, Cutler, and Lutgendorf include accounts of performance of sacred texts as songs, and give English translations of Tamil devotional works. The more recent Hindu Spirituality is a collaborative effort between Indian and Western scholars, thus presenting insiders’ views of religion as well.

**Sources on Migration and Diaspora**

The idea of a “diaspora” is clearly defined in the wide-ranging text, Robin Cohen’s Global Diasporas: An Introduction. Cohen intentionally defines diaspora broadly: while it includes the well-known cases of Jews and Africans, she expands the notion to encompass diasporas of imperial labor needs, trading diasporas such as that of Chinese, and professional and

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cultural “diasporas in the age of globalization,” which neatly describes many
South Indians in the U.S. For Cohen,

The idea of a diaspora thus varies greatly. However, all diasporic communities settled outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories, acknowledge that “the old country”—a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore—always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions.20

A diaspora exhibits identifiable characteristics, which according to Cohen includes:

- the expansion from a homeland in search of work;
- a collective memory and myth about the homeland;
- an idealization of the supposed ancestral homeland;
- a return movement;
- a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over time;
- the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries.21

Cohen’s work provides a useful model for understanding South Indian migration to the U.S., and their formation of a diaspora in this new setting.

Several books have been useful in gaining an understanding of the maintenance, adaptation, and meaning of Indian culture in diasporic settings. The edited volume *A Sacred Thread: Modern Transmission of Hindu Traditions in India and Abroad* includes accounts of home and temple religious services and practices, and has several interesting case studies on Indian life in America which provide insights to the ways in which Indian culture is


brought to America and re-established. Arthur and Usha Helweg’s *An Immigrant Success Story: East Indians in America* discusses Indians’ motivations for immigration, their experiences in the United States, and their new lives as Americans. The Helwegs investigate difficulties new immigrants face, both in integrating themselves into American culture and in maintaining their Indian heritage; the authors write of Indian-Americans’ need to establish a career, raise children successfully, and consider the possibility of return to India. A third work, *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity*, includes many case studies from South Africa, Fiji, Trinidad, United States, and Britain that encompass a variety of theoretical approaches.

Peter van der Veer’s *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora* takes a more theoretical approach than the above works in its consideration of problems such as the role of imagination in the creation of a diaspora. This edited volume includes case studies from Fiji, Trinidad, the United States, and elsewhere. Van der Veer cautions the reader on

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oversimplification of the term “diaspora” by noting the diversity in time and place of Indian migrations:

. . . the complexity and diversity of the South Asian diaspora offer important insights for the understanding of international migration processes. Overseas South Asian communities have different historical trajectories because they have developed in widely divergent historical contexts in many parts of the world. It is the fragmented nature of these contexts and experiences that complicates the use of “the South Asian diaspora” as a transparent category.26

It is important to note that South Indian people immigrated to the U.S. at a certain time—mostly but not entirely after 1965—for particular reasons, such as seeking professional employment. Therefore their situation differs in many respects from that of other South Indian diasporic communities throughout the world, such as in the Caribbean. Van der Veer states that some diasporic experiences have much to do with a cultural interaction that takes place between the host culture and the immigrant group:

. . . the articulation of nation and religion takes place not within one community, but in the interaction between a so-called indigenous group and a so-called immigrant group, between the nation and the nonnation. . . the missions of modern Hinduism cater to feelings of political importance by making politics irrelevant and to diasporic imaginations by offering a transnational Hinduism, not bound to any particular soil.27

The quality of being transnational is found in Karnatak music in the United States, as we shall see later: Indians are able to create Karnatak music events

26. Van der Veer, Nation and Migration, 1.

27. Van der Veer, Nation and Migration, 9-10.
in the U.S. by, in part, establishing networks that intersect with American social, business, educational, and political realms, while also maintaining and developing ties with India.

Sources on Indian Music in Diasporic Settings

Compared with the resources available on Indian society and Indian music, very few works are concerned explicitly with the phenomenon of Indian music in a diasporic setting. Gerry Farrell’s recently published monograph, *Indian Music and the West*,\(^\text{28}\) presents his examination of historical documents, correspondence, and early recordings of Indian music in Europe and America. Regarding the West’s fascination with “the orient,” he writes that Western audiences and performers often created images of India, at times with the unwitting or unwilling collaboration of Indians:

At the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, audiences across the United States were enjoying a strange, exotic spectacle. A contemporary dancer was performing a series of concerts to the music of Delibe’s *Lakmé*, but with oriental dances of her own eccentric creation. On-stage, to add authenticity, like living props, sat a group of Indian musicians who played an array of unusual-sounding instruments. The dancer was Ruth St. Denis, and the Royal Musicians of Hindustan were led by Inayat Khan, *vina* player and Sufi. . . .

For Indian musicians, all this was not so much a descent into Western degeneracy or fakery as a journey around the West’s

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oriental chimera, which, by the twentieth century, had become fully formed, with a vibrant life and logic of its own. It was a journey made by Indian musicians to the West, only to find that the East had already arrived, though not in a form that they recognized.\textsuperscript{29}

Farrell does not specifically address South Indian immigrant communities’ efforts to establish their music outside of India, though he does discuss some North Indian musicians and their roles as performers and teachers in the West. This book contains much information about Westerners’ ideas about Indian music, and the effect of Indian music upon Western composers.

\textit{Asian Music in North America} is a 1985 volume of UCLA’s \textit{Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology}, and it includes three reports on the musical activities of groups of South Asians in the United States.\textsuperscript{30} Alison Arnold introduces her study, “Aspects of Asian Musical Life in Chicago,” as such:

The largely first generation Indian immigrants in Chicago lead active and varied musical lives that uphold their native musical traditions and simultaneously reinforce their own cultural diversity.\textsuperscript{31}

She notes that music is a means for subgroups of Indian immigrants to maintain ethnic differences from other Indian groups: certain groups listen

\textsuperscript{29} Farrell, \textit{Indian Music and the West}, 144.

\textsuperscript{30} Nazir Jairazbhoy and Sue Carole De Vale, eds., \textit{Asian Music in North America, Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology}, vol. 6 (Los Angeles: Program in Ethnomusicology, Department of Music, 1985).

to, perform, and study only certain types of music. This volume also includes another article by Joan Erdman on South Asian music and dance in Chicago, an article by Gordon Thompson and Medha Yodh on Gujaratis in California, and other sections on Asian-Americans from countries other than India.

An issue of *Contributions to Asian Studies* from 1978 is devoted to Indian music. A contribution by David Reck discusses the American interest in Indian culture and music:

There is (no doubt about it) a strong undercurrent of India and things Indian in the contemporary scene in the United States and Canada. And music—Indian classical music and American composers and musicians influenced by it—is a part of it. Put another way, Saraswati, the resplendent Hindu goddess of music and learning, has joined the rush of millions of immigrants to the New World.

Reck explains that the music and cultures of India and the West are connected for many reasons, including trends and fads, religion, commerce, immigration, and “the Western composer’s unrelenting search for new ideas.” Elsewhere in this volume, Brian Silver’s article also discusses Western composers’ use of Indian musical materials; Bonnie Wade looks at Hindustani musicians in the United States; Daniel Neuman examines the

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impact of the West on Indian music and musicians; and Robert E. Brown details some of the major changes Karnatak music has undergone and offers suggestions for its future.

Several writers suggest reasons why Indian music has been successful in gaining a place in America. Daniel Neuman concisely outlines the factors that have been responsible for the flourishing of Indian art music in North America:

A high cultural prestige in its homeland. . . . A symbol repertoire in its music which speaks to all manner of religious interests. . . . The improvisatory scope of Indian music . . . Metered performances . . . Performance practice is highly virtuosic . . . A small ensemble performance tradition. . . . A coherent group of professional musicians exist.35

Here, he is comparing Indian music to other Asian art music traditions, to show how only Indian music offers all of the factors necessary for feasibility and success in the United States.

James Cowdery’s conference paper, “The American Students of Balasaraswati,” presents results from an anonymous questionnaire that he distributed to several dozen students of this famous late Bharata Natyam dancer. He notes that “comparatively little has been written about the people

35. Daniel Neuman, “The Ecology of Indian Music” (Unpublished paper, [1980s]), 12-14. That the ensembles are small means that: “It is highly mobile . . . Tours are relatively inexpensive . . . Performances are easy to stage . . . Financial risks are minimized.” (12-14).
who become serious students of genres from other cultures." He finds the reason for this lacuna in the priorities of many scholars:

Ethnomusicological and Dance Ethnological studies have often tended to refer to genres as if they existed in pure states, played out again and again within their home cultures. Although serious students have been crossing over cultural boundaries for a number of decades now, one almost senses a general embarrassment behind the paucity of scholarly interest in such pursuits. Certainly, there is little consensus in academic circles concerning the appropriateness of extended performance study of foreign genres: while many agree that some "hands on" contact is a good component of scholarly fieldwork, there is much less agreement when such performance study becomes an end in itself. . . .

Fortunately, the situation has changed in recent years, as more and more scholars are drawn to viewing cultures as dynamic, both within their own boundaries and in their contacts with other cultures. Serious performance study over an extended period of time is indeed the foundation of the continuation of Indian art music. This study may be undertaken in Indian-American communities, in Indian music schools in the West that attract Western and Indian students, or in India itself. Therefore, to me it seems the best approach for understanding Karnatak music and its context is for the researcher to learn in a traditional way to perform the music.


Overview of the Thesis

The sequence of chapters in this thesis is conceived as representative of the unfolding of Karnatak music’s story in America: I begin by following the paths of the pioneers who first brought Karnatak music to the U.S.; I then look at the important post-1965 Indian immigrant communities and their organizations that support music; next, the fruition of the work of music teachers is seen in the music of non-immigrants; and I close with fusion, an almost inevitable extension of Karnatak music as musicians listen, interact, and perform in cross-cultural settings.

Following this introduction there are six chapters which each present a different facet of Karnatak music in the United States. Chapter Two focuses on the pioneers who were among the first we know of to bring this music to America. I discuss the careers of Balakrishnan, an artist who made one of the earliest recordings of South Indian music in the U.S., and T. Viswanathan, a professional Karnatak musician who has long been based in America. Viswanathan arrived in the U.S. four decades ago and has been teaching in the U.S. continuously for over thirty years. Among his contributions is an innovative system of notation for gamaka [note shape, or ornament].

The focus shifts in Chapter Three to the groups of immigrants who came from South India to the U.S. since 1965. Some of them have created musical, cultural, and religious organizations which support Karnatak music.
Through such groups, a scene of music lessons, house concerts, composer festivals, and visiting artists from India has been created and sustained to the present. Chapter Four takes a closer look at one particular institution, the Hindu temple, that plays an important role in Indian-American social, religious, cultural, and music life.

Karnatak music teachers in the U.S. are discussed in Chapter Five. Their work is at the heart of the continuation of this music. In the U.S. their role in building an Indian-American community is also significant. I introduce two teachers, Shakuntala Murthy and Kala Prasad, who are responsible for the transmission of aspects of Indian culture in the U.S.

Moving away from the activities of immigrants, Chapter Six looks at the lives and music of second-generation Indian-Americans and non-Indian-Americans. Their involvement in Karnatak music in the U.S. is often for different reasons than that of immigrants. I focus on several musicians, and present their ideas on doing Karnatak music.

Chapter Seven ends the thesis with a look at some of the possible outcomes of cross-cultural musical interaction between Indian and Western musicians. I examine different approaches to Karnatak fusion music that are found in the U.S., and present interviews with artists Royal Hartigan and Gregory Acker in which they speak of their approaches to the ethics issues of fusion music.
Early South Indian Musicians in the United States

Indians and America: Oppression and Fascination

At the close of the nineteenth century South Asian immigrants began to arrive in America. During the first several decades of the twentieth century, several thousand people from the Panjab area of Northern India came to locations spread along the West coast of North America from southern California to Canada. Mostly men without their families, they sought employment in agriculture, railroad construction, and the lumber industry. They often lived together, maintaining aspects of their Indian culture, such as food, language, and religion. At this early stage of Indian immigration, only a small number of South Indians came to America.

1. There are several good sources on early Indian immigration to the U.S. Rajinder Garcha’s article presents a useful summation of Sikh history in India, aspects of their culture, and their migration to the U.S. and Canada: “The Sikhs in North America: History and Culture,” Ethnic Forum 12, no. 2 (1992): 80-93; see esp. 83-87. Karen Leonard’s article compares this earlier period of migration with the post-1965 movement: “South Asian Immigrants: Then and Now,” San Jose Studies 14, no. 2 (1988): 71-84. See also Leonard’s “Historical Constructions of Ethnicity: Research on Punjabi Immigrants in California,” Journal of American Ethnic History 12, no. 4 (1993): 3-26, which includes figures on the
Although several thousand Indians migrated to the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century, by the middle of the century the number of Indians residing in the U.S. actually declined. This was in part due to the enactment of state and federal laws and judicial decisions that effectively banned further immigration to the U.S. by Asians. The effect of these laws included the denial of U.S. citizenship rights to Indians and others who might have wanted to apply for it, the revocation of citizenship for some individuals who had previously attained it, a halt in new immigration including that by immigrants’ family members, and a loss of land ownership for Asians already residing in America. As a result

numbers of Panjabi immigrants, an overview of research on them, and a discussion of their identity. On the retention and maintenance of Indian culture among Panjabi immigrants to the U.S., see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), Chapter 8, “The Tide of Turbans,” 294-314.


3. For a synopsis of U.S. laws that had an impact of immigration from India, see Karen Leonard, “South Asian Immigration: Then and Now,” 73, and Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore*, 7, 15. Some of the laws passed in the U.S. that limited Asian opportunities in America include: The 1917 Barred Zone Act, which halted Asian immigration; the 1923 Thind Decision, which denied citizenship to Indians, who were found to be “Caucasian” but not “white” (Takaki, 298-300); the Immigration Act of 1924, which banned immigration by those who could not become citizens (including Indians and other Asians); and the California Alien Land Laws, which prevented Asian land ownership. See also Hugh Johnston, “The Surveillance of Indian Nationalists in North America, 1908-1918,” *BC Studies* no. 78 (1988): 3-27.

of hardships and discrimination, these laws, and occasional acts of violence directed towards them, many Indians returned to India between 1920-1940. Thus Indians in early twentieth century America often faced severe racial discrimination and inequality, and difficult material and social conditions. Nonetheless, migration continued when possible due to a perception of increased opportunity for jobs and higher wages that might be found in America. Additionally, from the turn of the century onward, small numbers of Indians came to study at American universities.

Within this context of white people’s discriminatory and oppressive treatment of Asians, some European-Americans held a great fascination with the “Orient,” as Asia was termed. Their interest was partially fueled by the written accounts of Western travelers to the Orient, including some by authors with a greater interest in Christian missionary work than in learning about Indian religions:

But this is India, land of inexplicable contradictions, and yet of many a bright and beautiful harmony.

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In addition to the effect of literature, travels to America by Indian religious leaders and teachers helped to create an American fascination with India. European-Americans who took an interest in India might try to find a teacher of spiritual practice, yoga, or music. Religious traditions of Asia, such as Indian Hinduism, appealed to Americans who perceived in them a spiritual and mystical quality, and found them to be attractive alternatives to mainstream American religions.

The Theosophical Society promoted a mystical version of Indian religion, asserting that its interpretation of Oriental beliefs was superior to Western thought. Founded by Henry Olcott and the Russian mystic Helena Blavatsky in New York in 1875, the Society shifted its world headquarters to the important South Indian coastal city Madras by 1882, and formed branches in California and elsewhere in America by 1897.8 Beginning when he was a young boy, a South Indian named J. Krishnamurthi was promoted as the prophet of the Theosophical Society by its leader Annie Besant. He eventually broke away to form his own spiritual movement based in Ojai, California. There and on tour, Krishnamurthi directly taught many Americans about Indian ideas and

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techniques for spiritual realization. In 1922, he experienced a transformative spiritual awakening in America, at Ojai.\(^9\)

The Chicago Exposition of 1893 featured a replica of a Hindu temple as a sample of Indian culture. The concurrently held Chicago World Parliament of Religions featured a Hindu representative, Vivekananda, who is thought to have been the first Indian to speak in the West on Hinduism.\(^{10}\) Vivekananda (1863-1902) was a spiritual disciple of Ramakrishna, a well-known religious leader and founder of an order of disciples and institutions in India. The Ramakrishna Order became active in America, and had ten *swamis* [teachers] based in the U.S. by 1933.\(^{11}\) Vivekananda himself established several Vedanta Centers in North America during an 1899-1900 visit. In 1929, Prabhavananda, a monk from the order, established a branch in Los Angeles, where the writers Christopher Isherwood and Aldous Huxley studied Hindu philosophy and religious practice.\(^{12}\)

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12. For an account of Isherwood’s relationship with his guru Prabhavananda, and of his guru’s career, see Christopher Isherwood, *My Guru and His Disciple* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980).
Residencies in the United States by Indian spiritual teachers foreshadow long-term teaching in the U.S. by Indian music and dance teachers from both North and South Indian traditions. The relationship that a student enters with an Indian music teacher is similar in many respects to a relationship with a swami or rishi [teacher or sage], in that the student is expected to behave respectfully to the teacher, to perform acts of service for him, and to study with the teacher for an extended time. A student of music, like a student of spiritual practice, should learn more than music—she should adopt something of the teacher’s ethics and worldview as well.

Instances of the intersection of Americans with Indian religious practices and ideas may have only had a direct impact on the lives of a small number of people, yet I believe they are significant to Karnatak music in the U.S. for laying a foundation of interest in India that would soon expand to include music. Indeed, the first performances of Indian music and dance occurred on American soil soon after the above events. Uday Shankar’s pan-Indian dance troupe, with music director Allauddin

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13. Indian spiritual guides continued to come to America after this early period, including Sri Easwaran; Mukthananda; Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, later known as Osho; Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, guru to The Beatles; and A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, popularly known as the ‘Hare Krishna’ movement.

14. A line from a poem in David Stuart Ryan’s *India: A Guide to the Experience* (London: Kozmik Press Centre, 1983), tells Western visitors contemplating a journey to India that the holy city Benares is a place where, “Philosophers muse on the sacred Vedic texts / Musicians practise at the feet of old masters” (108). Elsewhere Ryan lists addresses for classical music teachers and astrologers one may visit there.
Khan, toured America in the 1930s. Dancer Ravi Shankar, Uday’s brother, later became a disciple of Khan and seriously learned to play sitar; he has for many years performed, taught, recorded, and resided in the United States and India. The first performances in America of South Indian genres took place shortly after these North Indian precedents. A little-known singer, Balakrishnan, resided in Southern California in the 1950s, performing South Indian Karnatak vocal music occasionally and teaching yoga to earn his living. In 1957, he released one of the first recordings of Karnatak music that was recorded in the U.S., *Raga: Songs of India*. In 1958, the well-known professional Karnatak flutist T. Viswanathan arrived at the University of California at Los Angeles for graduate study, beginning his four decades of residence and university teaching in America.

Early instances of Karnatak music in the U.S. can be found in two areas of American culture: associated with those interested in Indian spirituality, and as part of university music department programs. Balakrishnan, an early performer of South Indian music in the U.S., taught yoga, an Indian practice of breathing and postures that is considered

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to be a spiritual discipline, as music itself can be. UCLA provided the first home in higher education for Karnatak music instruction beginning in 1958; in 1961, Wesleyan University first offered courses on South Indian music; and in 1971, Trichy Sankaran and Jon Higgins established a program in South Indian music at York University, Toronto, Canada, in which Sankaran teaches to the present. Resident artists at these institutions, such as Viswanathan and his brother T. Ranganathan, were brought from India to teach in academic settings and were not necessarily members of a large immigrant community, such as develops in the following decade after the reform of U.S. immigration laws in 1965. South Indian musicians who came to the United States can be seen to be part of larger trend such as American’s interest in Asian cultures, and Indians’ interest in teaching and performing in the West. The artists profiled here can be seem as both reflecting and creating their times.


Our tradition teaches us that sound is God—Nada Brahma. That is, musical sound and musical experience are steps to the realization of the self. We view music as a kind of spiritual discipline that raises one’s inner being to divine peacefulness and bliss. We are taught that one of the fundamental goals a Hindu works towards in his lifetime is a knowledge of the true meaning of the universe—its unchanging, eternal essence—and this is realized first by a complete knowledge of one’s self and one’s own nature. The highest aim of our music is to reveal the essence of the universe it reflects, and the *ragas* are among the means by which this essence can be apprehended. Thus, through music, one may reach God.
Balakrishnan: An Early South Indian Musician in the U.S.

The earliest recorded cases of South Indian musicians in the United States include several who came to southern California in the 1950s. T. Viswanathan arrived in 1958 to attend an ethnomusicology program at the University of California at Los Angeles [hereafter, UCLA]. He recalls there being two others from South India who had preceded him to America, Wasantha Wana Singh and Balakrishnan. 17 Singh had settled in New York, where he directed a school in which he taught a variety of Indian styles of music and dance. He also helped produce albums for the Folkways record label, including their first release to feature songs in Tamil language, *Music of India: Traditional and Classical*. It was recorded in India in 1951, and Singh helped to write the program notes. 18

Balakrishnan was a musician and yoga instructor from the Southern Indian state Kerala. In 1958, he came to know of Viswanathan’s residency at UCLA and contacted him in Los Angeles, where they both lived. Balakrishnan was teaching yoga there with an American woman who had written a book on yoga and had connections to people in Hollywood, providing them with a source of students. Balakrishnan also knew Karnatak music, which he had learned in India from the famous vocalist


Maharajpuram Viswanatha Iyer. Balakrishnan had been less than completely satisfied by his music career in India, apparently because he had not received an adequate number of opportunities for performance. In the 1950s he left his studies in Madras and traveled to New Delhi to attempt to advance his singing career. He performed for broadcast at various All India Radio stations along his trip north, and gave live concerts.

Balakrishnan then left India and embarked on a journey to Singapore, Indonesia and Australia in order to earn money through music and make his way to America. He next went to several Caribbean islands, including Trinidad, Barbados, and Guyana, where Indian laborers had previously settled. He performed informally by going house to house in the evenings and singing spiritual and religious songs, and he also arranged some public concerts. The older Indians who had settled in the Caribbean many years prior to his visit had not heard much, if any, classically-influenced devotional singing for years. Balakrishnan stayed a few months in this area, then traveled to the United States. After arriving in New York he

19. Maharajpuram Viswanatha Iyer was a famous South Indian musician of the 1930s and 1940s. He trained noted vocalist Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, and is the father of vocalist Maharajpuram Santhanam.

20. In each nation he visited, Balakrishnan resourcefully made contacts with local people who then arranged his performances. For example, he would pay a courtesy visit to Indian embassies, and ask for a concert to be arranged; in Java, the Indian Ambassador was also South Indian, so Balakrishnan was particularly successful in setting up concerts in Indonesia.
met an American woman involved in teaching yoga. She was impressed with him and asked him to join her in teaching, to which he agreed, and they then traveled to California together. He arrived in Los Angeles in the mid-1950s and settled there for a few years. Balakrishnan made his living in the U.S. as a teacher of yoga, and though he performed Karnatak music he did not teach it in the United States.

Balakrishnan was the first South Indian musician that Viswanathan encountered in the United States, and the two musicians would occasionally play music together informally. By this time period, 1958-1960, Balakrishnan was married to a non-Indian American; they had a son and then later divorced. Viswanathan recalls participating in a benefit concert held at a high school auditorium, which Balakrishnan had organized to raise money to take his son to India. The program consisted of a mixture of various genres of Indian arts, including dances from Kerala, a yoga demonstration, and Karnatak flute music. With the proceeds, Balakrishnan took his son to Kerala, so that he would be raised in India.  

Although not a top-ranked Karnatak musician, Balakrishnan possessed skills sufficient to perform a complete concert of South Indian music,

21. It was not known to Viswanathan if Balakrishnan himself ever returned to America after taking his son to Kerala. Viswanathan last saw him in 1960 when both were residing in California, but did not encounter Balakrishnan in 1970 when Viswanathan returned to live in the Los Angeles area.
including knowledge of a repertoire of compositions and the ability to improvise. He recorded and released an album of his vocal music, with *sitar* and *tabla* accompaniment by Anand Mohan.

![Cover of Balakrishna’s album Ragas: Songs of India.](image)

Fig. 2-1. Cover of Balakrishna’s album *Ragas: Songs of India*. Folkways FG 3530, 1957.

Balakrishnan’s Folkways release *Ragas: Songs of India* is perhaps one of the first commercial releases of Karnatak music that was recorded in the United States. Many commercial recordings of Karnatak music have

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22. Balakrishnan’s album is Balakrishna of Travancore, *Ragas: Songs of India*, (Folkways FG 3530, 1957). Note the variant spelling of his name.
been made in India since the close of the 1800s, and at the time of Balakrishnan’s album some had been marketed in the U.S.; but very few were recorded in the U.S.\textsuperscript{23} On this disc he sings a selection of traditional Indian compositions in several languages (Hindi, Tamil, Sanskrit, and Telugu) and performs \textit{alapana} and \textit{swara kalpana} improvisations.

The Balakrishnan recording reflects the qualities of the early stages of Karnatak music in the United States: less than “first-class” artists were recorded (in the year of the recording, 1957, the top Indian performers who would come to reside in the U.S. in the 1960s had not yet arrived); proper instruments were not available for the recording session, so Balakrishnan is accompanied by a North Indian \textit{tabla} rather than a \textit{mridangam} [South Indian drum]; and the \textit{tambura} [drone-lute] is consistently out of tune and poorly played. The liner notes of the LP may indicate the lack of knowledge of this music in late 1950s America. The texts are hand written in various Indian scripts, transliterated into Roman characters, and then translated into English; very brief definitions are given for several terms. Missing from the notes are analysis of the music, description of instruments, notation of \textit{raga}, and, notably, biographical information on the performers. The recording thus has a feeling of anonymity, in that the

listener has little information about the performer, his music, or culture, aside from song texts. In contrast, notes from recordings of South Indian art music from the 1960s include these and other missing bits of information, in order to serve educational purposes for American audiences who were largely unfamiliar with Karnatak music.\(^{24}\)

Regarding the contributions of Balakrishnan to Karnatak music in the United States, he was one of the very first South Indians to give concerts and make recordings in the U.S. While further research may well yield accounts of earlier immigrants who were Karnatak musicians, none seem to have left any recordings. The Folkways release by Balakrishna of Travancore marks the beginning of a history of recordings of South Indian music in America that extends to the present. Finally, regarding Balakrishnan’s life and career, his activity in America may have been a high point in his career, for much the same reasons that it would be for a performer today. He had access to high quality recording studios and efficient distribution networks for releases; he was able to perform his music for appreciative audiences; and he found patrons or clients for his teaching of Indian arts, in his case yoga. But by sending his son back to India he demonstrated that he was not interested in permanently settling abroad.

\(^{24}\) For example, Ramnad Krishnan, Kaccheri: A Concert of South Indian Classical Music (Nonesuch H-72040, 1971). The liner notes were written by Robert Brown and Viswanathan.
T. Viswanathan: The First Resident Music Teacher

In July, 1958, at the age of thirty, the flutist T. Viswanathan left his home and family in Madras, traveled by ship from Bombay to New York. He then proceeded across the United States by train to The University of California at Los Angeles [UCLA], stopping in Bloomington, Indiana, for an orientation session with other Fulbright grantees. Viswanathan was beginning a two-year residency at UCLA in the study of ethnomusicology, with funding for one year from a Fulbright grant, and for the second from the university. This period of study involved learning to perform musical traditions from all over the world, including Javanese and Balinese Gamelan, music from Iran and Japan, and Western music. Viswanathan taught a study group in South Indian art music, and performed concerts as a soloist and as leader of this group.

Viswanathan’s career as a professional Karnatak musician has since been spent largely in the United States, as a university faculty member. His arrival marked the first long-term residency in the United States of a South Indian artist of such a high caliber and regard: he has been honored with the title “Sangeeta Kalanidhi” by the Music Academy of Madras, the award of the Sangeet Natak Akademi (Indian central government), and the National Heritage Fellowship (U.S. government).²⁵ His career has been

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unique for a Karnatak musician, and thus should not be taken to represent an average or predictable path that a South Indian musician can take in America, if such a path even exists. Nonetheless, Viswanathan’s contribution to spreading understanding and love for Indian music has been enormous. Over four decades he has introduced hundreds of students to his music—he now occasionally teaches children of his former students. This section will review his biography from the mid-1950s up to the mid-1970s, the period preceding his departure from India until just before his appointment as a faculty member at Wesleyan University.

Fig. 2-2. T. Viswanathan and T. Ranganathan promotional brochure cover. 1970s. Design by Jan Stewart.
Viswanathan’s Studies at UCLA

In my conversations and interviews with Viswanathan, he described his coming to reside and study in the United States. From the perspective of his non-Indian American Karnatak vocal music students at UCLA, he was presenting to them something new and different; but from the viewpoint of a musician in Madras, he was doing something new and different by going abroad. Thus he was a pioneer among his peers in India. Viswanathan came to UCLA in 1958, at which time few Americans would have heard, or even heard of, Karnatak music. North Indian sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar had already introduced Hindustani music to the American public, though the peak of his popularity was still a decade away; Balakrishnan of Kerala was already in California, but was not teaching or performing widely. Viswanathan was greeted from the ship in New York by an American who had studied dance in India with his sister, the great Bharata Natyam dancer Balasaraswati. In Los Angeles he roomed with Hardja Susilo, a Javanese musician who was joining the UCLA program as well, and who also still teaches in the United States today, on the faculty of the University of Hawai‘i. Viswanathan quickly made new friends in what was for him a new cultural and social environment.

The Ethnomusicology program at UCLA included in the late 1950s study groups in the musical traditions of Java, Bali, Iran, West Africa, and Japan; Viswanathan was to teach South Indian Karnatak music there to a
study group of other students. The department was at that time chaired by Mantle Hood, who had met Viswanathan’s sister Balasaraswati and mother Jayammal in Madras in August, 1958. Hood had presented a lecture on Javanese Gamelan music to the Madras Music Academy, in which he demonstrating each instrument with recordings, and discussed Gamelan music theory.\textsuperscript{26} Viswanathan noted that Hood was well received, but that many of the Karnatak musicians in the audience did not fully appreciate the sounds of Indonesian music, with someone asking if it was out of tune. Viswanathan realized that he might himself face difficulties in explaining to people at home in India what he was studying at UCLA.

Robert E. Brown was instrumental in bringing Viswanathan to UCLA. As a graduate student in UCLA’s ethnomusicology program, Brown had come to Madras in 1957-59 to study \textit{mridangam} and Karnatak music. He too was a “pioneer,” for at that time very little work had been done on Karnatak music by Western scholars, with the notable exception of Harold Powers, who studied Karnatak singing and theory with R. Rangaramanuja Ayyangar and others in Madras during 1952-54.\textsuperscript{27} Brown happened to meet

\textsuperscript{26} An audio recording of Mantle Hood’s 1958 lecture at the Madras Music Academy is available from the Wesleyan University World Music Archives (WMA TVR 180).

\textsuperscript{27} Harold S. Powers, \textit{The Background of the South Indian Raga System} (Princeton University Ph.D. diss., 1959). Pre-dating the work of scholars from the 1950s, colonial-period non-Indian writing often contains a considerable amount of information on Indian music, though such sources are often overlooked at present; for a discussion of this issue, see Farrell, \textit{Indian Music and the West} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), Chapter 1, “Europeans and Indian Music in the Late Eighteenth Century.”
Viswanathan’s family after inquiring at the United States Information Service in Madras about English-speaking mridangam teachers. Having already read about and seen performances of the famous Bharata Natyam dancer Balasaraswati, Brown was delighted to discover that his teacher would be her brother, T. Ranganathan. Brown encouraged another of Balasaraswati’s brothers, Viswanathan, to apply for the Fulbright fellowship, which Viswanathan was awarded in 1958. At that time Viswanathan had earned a graduate degree in economics, had worked as a government clerk, and was completing a three-year Government of India fellowship for advanced music study under his flute teacher T. N. Swaminatha Pillai. Viswanathan was reluctant at first, but Brown convinced him of the value of the experience ahead at UCLA.

**Viswanathan’s Karnatak Music Study Group**

Viswanathan’s teaching assignment at UCLA was to instruct the Indian music study group, which was officially directed by Robert Brown. Among the students were several future professional ethnomusicologists.\(^\text{28}\) They

began with basic exercises such as singing *swara* [solfege note] patterns in various *ragas*, for example:

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sa ri sa ri sa ri sa –                        sa ri ga ma pa da ni sa
sa ri ga sa ri ga sa ri sa ri ga ma pa da ni sa
sa ri ga ma sa ri ga ma sa ri ga ma pa da ni sa
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Fig. 2-3. The first three Swaravali Varisa exercises. The upper octave indication for high “sa” is not given here.

By learning to sing these patterns, *solkattu* [rhythmic syllabization], and simple songs, the study group entered into a traditional, insider’s approach to learning to perform Karnatak music. Within a couple of semesters they had progressed to the forms *varnam*, an etude-like piece used to open a concert, and *kriti*, a common song form.

The group performed on May 21, 1960, as part of the Music Department of UCLA’s “Festival of Oriental Music and the Related Arts,” in which all of the visiting artists from Asian countries presented their study groups’ work. The music of India group performed an ambitious program that amounted to a full concert, including pieces in the forms *varnam*, *kriti*, and *tillana*; with each member taking a *solkattu* solo during one composition.\(^9\) Robert Brown preceded their concert with a lecture-

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demonstration on Karnatak music theory, in which he explained the concepts *raga, tala, alapana, tanam, kriti, swara kalpana, niraval,* and *pallavi;* for each, Viswanathan played an example on the flute. After the group sang, Brown played the *vina* and then Viswanathan played the flute.

Bob Brown’s article in an accompanying program book, “Introduction to the Music of South India,” illustrates his concern for communicating with listeners who were completely unaware of this art:

A Westerner is confronted with several difficult problems in approaching the music of India. Although he soon becomes accustomed to the absence of harmony, the different instrumental color and voice quality, and the persistent buzzing of the drone, he misses the real beauty and subtlety of Indian musical expression unless he has some idea of what it is that the performer is doing, as well as what he is *not* doing, for restraint is an important facet of any sophisticated art form. In this short article, an attempt will be made to touch on some of the main characteristics of Indian music, through the twin aspects of melody and rhythm, and to give a brief idea of its formal structure, its social and religious background.\(^{30}\)

He goes on to write about Karnatak musical concepts such as *raga* and *tala,* and gives an overview of the rules a performer observes. Judging from the enthusiastic applause on the recording of the concert, the audience was very appreciative of the group’s performance that day.

This concert was remarkable because it was the first given by students who were systematically trained in the United States in the performance

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of South Indian Karnatak music. In the UCLA program in ethnomusicology, the graduate students were essentially teaching one another about their traditions by means of performance groups; for example, Viswanathan played in Susilo’s Gamelan and Susilo learned Karnatak singing. Learning various traditions of music—Persian, Japanese, Javanese, Balinese—was cited by Viswanathan as a very important, valuable component of his musical education, and one that would have been unavailable in India.  

In less than two years Viswanathan had led his group through a sequence of exercises and compositions through which they developed vocal technique, South Indian musicality, and a sense of style.

31. Such learning methods have occasionally been the subject of controversy within the field of ethnomusicology. For example, Bruno Nettl notes in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 254:

> . . . in the 1950s and 1960s the contrast between participant and observer in fieldwork was a major source of conflict in ethnomusicology, the one side being blamed for neglect of scholarly objectives and the other for lack of truly musical interest. Direct study of performance became, however, an extremely useful vehicle for understanding a musical system. . . . Typical of this approach is the work done by those who studied in the UCLA program in ethnomusicology.
During Viswanathan’s residency at UCLA he gave only a few performances outside of the University, not yet embarking on national concert tours in the U.S. as he would soon experience while accompanying Balasaraswati in 1962. In the ethnomusicology program, he focused on his studies and teaching and had little extra time to devote to outside performances. However, I believe his small number of outside concerts may also reflect the limited knowledge of Karnatak music that he must have encountered at that time. Very few Americans had any exposure to
the music, and there were few immigrants from South India in the United States at this time.\textsuperscript{32} Later, Viswanathan and his brother Ranganathan steadily built a large base of people who enjoyed and appreciated Karnatak music, particularly among non-Indian Americans. In contrast to the prospects of finding an audience educated in Indian music during this early period, today a Karnatak concert at Wesleyan would be packed with old students who count \textit{tala} just as audiences in Madras do, and who are familiar with several of the compositions, having learned them from Viswanathan.

\textit{Viswanathan’s Notation Innovation}

During his career in the United States, Viswanathan developed an expanded notation system that allows non-Indian students to correctly perform \textit{gamaka}. This term denotes a musical note’s shape or movement.\textsuperscript{33} Varying in character with each \textit{raga}, several types of \textit{gamaka} exist, including \textit{kampita} [oscillation, shake], \textit{jaru} [slide], and \textit{janta} [stress]. \textit{Gamakas} are of critical important in interpreting a \textit{raga} correctly, yet they can be difficult to hear and sing properly for those who have not grown up

\textsuperscript{32} Some of the pre-1965 Tamil immigrants from South India were professionals affiliated with the United Nations. See Vasudha Narayanan, “Tamils,” in \textit{American Immigrant Cultures} (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1997), 874-5.

\textsuperscript{33} The usual translation of \textit{gamaka} as “ornament” is inadequate because \textit{gamakas} are essential, not superfluous, to the music; this point has been raised by Vijayasree Mokkapati (personal communication), who is profiled in Chapter Six.
hearing and singing them. Viswanathan’s system is an advance from standard notation systems used in India, which includes indications for only the *swara* and *sahitya* [note and text]:³⁴

![Excerpt from printed standard notation for the *gitam* “Vara Veena.” 1994.](fig25.jpg)

Viswanathan decided that his students needed more information. He intended that they should use his notation as a system that is descriptive, rather than prescriptive. In his system, in addition to the elements of standard notation, an outline of the *gamakas* is given. Notation for oscillations, slides, and stresses of the notes is written just above the standard elements of text and notes. The following is an example from his system:

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In using the notation for his classes, Viswanathan sings the phrases to the students and they repeat after him, in the usual manner of teaching Karnataka music. He also explains to them the *gamaka* of each note, for
which the notation serves as a description and memory aid. In the above example, the second note ‘ga’ of the first line has a *janta* notation above it, as is appropriate for repeated notes. The student can read the *gamaka* notation, ‘ri ga,’ and thus easily perform the correct *gamaka* for the note ‘ga’. With usage it becomes very easy to read, and a student can quickly see which *gamakas* will occur in the music; she may even learn to predict correct *gamakas*.

Regarding the factors that lead to his innovation, Viswanathan stated:

I realized I had to adopt some method to make it understandable. Regular notation was not enough. [A student] asked, “Why are you singing ‘ga’ [with a wide oscillation in pitch] when it only says ‘ga’ [steady pitch]?” I started to realize, musicians don’t even realize they are putting so much ornamentation. . . . In 1968, I was transcribing for my *alapana* dissertation and I realized that I myself had conflict in which *swara* to use. I myself said, “Oh, this is it,” then inside I felt, “No, it is there.” There are so many possibilities for interpretation; unless you write as detailed as possible, there will be a problem for the person who studies outside of the culture.\(^{35}\)

His system is descriptive in that it shows visually what one must sing, without assuming that the student is able to correctly interpret *gamakas* by just reading *swara* notation (as in the first published notation example). This adaptation of teaching methodology was made to serve the needs of his American students. Viswanathan said in another writer’s interview given in Madras:

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Our music is nourished by the cultural ambiance of constant, close listening. But Westerners are sight-oriented. I blend the two by giving the notation and insisting on its being memorized. They are not used to this. I also teach the Sanskrit alphabet for accurate textual pronunciation. I have developed a “descriptive” notation (as different from the prescriptive in vogue here) to explain in detail what happens to the swaras in each raga. They don’t have the listening experience to read ri ga ma pa, in Sahana for example, to give each swara its weight, inflexion, and oscillation. I finally came to this descriptive method after long struggle in teaching alapana to foreign students.36

Since many of his students had not been raised in India, Viswanathan has had to make other adjustments as well. He stated that “Indian musicians don’t behave the way I do towards students,” in that in America he can be more informal with his students than would a teacher in India, where it is likely that he would have felt a need to keep more distance. In terms of the musical materials, he moves more quickly through the course sequence than would normally happen in India. But in America Viswanathan has been quite free to express and maintain his family’s ornate yet difficult musical style—developed in part earlier this century by his grandmother, the famous vina artist Dhanammal (1867-1938)—whereas in India audiences may often demand a lighter, more easily accessible musical style.37


South India Music and Dance at Wesleyan University

The Beginnings of the Program

In 1958 anthropology faculty member David McAllester taught the first ethnomusicology courses at Wesleyan. McAllester was a founding member of the new Society for Ethnomusicology, and has a research focus on the music of the Navajo people of the American Southwest. In 1960-61, American composer John Cage had a short-term residence as a visiting

teacher in Wesleyan University’s Music Department. He proved to be quite a stimulus for the musical community there and was the catalyst for sweeping changes in ideology and curriculum that began soon after his time in Middletown. Of Cage’s visit, Wesleyan music professor Richard Winslow wrote in his annual departmental report, “we have learned a great deal from [Cage]: none of us is yet comfortable with what we’ve learned.”

One of the most influential American experimental music composers of the twentieth century, Cage had a great interest in Asian culture and music, and had been influenced by the writing of Ananda Coomaraswamy among others. Beginning in the 1930s, Cage composed pieces inspired by Indian tonality, rhythms, emotions, or seasons.

In his annual report that year, Winslow went on to identify a pressing need to add two key areas of study to the music curriculum that persist at Wesleyan to the present: experimental music and Indian music. Winslow noted the changes that were taking place at that time in both Western art music and American culture, and how these areas of change were linked to one another. In particular, he cites recently widespread and vastly


improved audio recording technology as one of the key forces behind the cultural shifts that were then taking place in America:

The year [1960-61] has been a disturbing one—overall, I think, for healthy reasons. The world is in a state of attempted adjustment, the college is in a state of attempted adjustment, and the arts are not immune. At one obvious level, for instance, musical styles have changed very rapidly; the phonograph record has made obvious many things which only five years ago were mysterious and has made available in great quantities the work of an incredible avant-garde and the music of the Orient. The very nature of what we teach is thus called into question and the attitude of students . . . toward traditional materials in unpredictable . . .

We should move into the area of Oriental music as part of our offering. As of this writing, Mr. Robert Brown . . . will come into the Department . . . Mr. Brown is a specialist in the Music of India and is conversant with the Orient generally. 41

Had the faculty not heard LP recordings of music from Bali, India, and Japan as they did, it is unlikely they would have been interested in promoting “Oriental” music in their department. The recordings altered the teachers’ perspective on their activities; other examples of such an influence of recordings on the process of making and understanding

music can be found across the twentieth century.\footnote{42}

**Indian Music Faculty at Wesleyan**

A doctoral candidate in UCLA’s ethnomusicology program with two years experience learning music in Madras, India, Robert E. Brown was appointed to teach in the new program in “Ethnic Music” at Wesleyan University beginning in 1961. He immediately began Javanese Gamelan and South Indian music study groups, such as those of UCLA, and invited guest artists to perform on campus. The Wesleyan Alumni magazine noted his presence:

>... the college’s current [1964] prominence in the field [ethnomusicology] is largely due to the work of two men who have fostered studies in the widely divergent cultures of the American Indian and South India. One is... a musician who has become something of a cultural ambassador for India...


It was back in 1931 that I was first drawn to Bali by the chance hearing of some recordings of Balinese music which had recently been made. Some of these were traditional popular songs and stylized episodes from classical plays, sung or declaimed to the soft accompaniment of unimaginable percussion instruments. Most enchanting, especially for me, a young composer in search of new sounds, were the recordings of the *gamelan*, the orchestra of Java and Bali composed primarily of tuned bronze gongs of many sizes and shapes, various forms of metallophones, cymbals, and hand beaten drums. These gamelan recordings had a polyphonic complexity, an animation and strange metallic shimmer like nothing I had ever heard. Nothing would satisfy me but to go East and hear it at its source.}
The musician is a bearded, quiet young man named Robert E. Brown, who introduced the South Indian or Carnatic music at Wesleyan in 1961. In a manner so gentle that he might have been expected to cause few ripples on campus, he has generated so much activity and interest in a completely strange subject that it is not unusual to hear the remark: “Wait till you see what Brown’s got going now.”

Within a few months of Brown’s arrival, sitarist Ravi Shankar and an Indian dance troupe performed, and a lecture series on aspects of Indian music theory was given by a musicologist from Madras. Brown took the Indian music study group to perform at neighboring colleges. He also established “Saraswati Kalashram,” a center for the study of the arts, in an old farm house on the edge of Middletown. There, he lived with Indian

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artists-in-residence and graduate students in a situation resembling the traditional Indian *gurukulam*. “The principle is Indian—to bring the students of music and language into constant contact with their teachers.”44 Brown also began a weekly series of “Curry Concerts” at his house, featuring student groups and different world traditions each week.

For five weeks in September and October of 1962, dancer Balasaraswati (1918-1984) was in residence at Wesleyan for the first time, following her American debut at Ted Shawn’s famous modern dance haven Jacob’s Pillow, in Western Massachusetts:

Garlanding the artist after the programme in the traditional Indian manner, Ted Shawn said: “You are in the presence of greatness. Tonight has been a historic night.”45

At Wesleyan, Balasaraswati gave seven dance recitals, her vocal accompanist Narasimhalu gave six of his own performances, and Viswanathan one flute concert.46


According to Viswanathan, at the Pillow audience member Jon Higgins, then an undergraduate at Wesleyan, was so captivated by Balasaraswati’s performance (particularly her singing, as she often did while dancing) that he decided he wanted to learn this music. Back at Wesleyan during Balasaraswati’s residency, he approached Viswanathan to ask if he could learn the music from him. He went on to a career as the first non-Indian to successfully sing Karnatak music for Indian audiences, among other achievements.

Balasaraswati’s musicians included her brother T. Ranganathan, who would be appointed as an Instructor of Indian Drumming at Wesleyan in 1963; later he was the first to hold the position Artist-in-Residence at Wesleyan. Aside from a period at Cal Arts (1970-75), Ranganathan taught at Wesleyan from 1963 until his demise in 1987. He is remembered by many of his students as the best teacher they ever had: his campus
memorial, a tree by the World Music Hall, has a plaque describing him as “an extraordinary teacher, brilliant musician, and friend.”

The 1962 Bharata Natyam performances of Balasaraswati and her troupe at Wesleyan were designed with an American audience in mind. Half were billed as either an “informal recital” or “lecture-demonstration.” The first events of the series were “informal” concerts, followed by an “Introduction to Bharata Natyam.” Subsequent events were devoted to a single dance piece or aspect of the dance, and the series ended with full performances. The intent of the sequence of events seems to first show the art in full, then break it down into understandable components, and finally to show the complete form again. Bonnie Wade notes a similar

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process at work in concerts in the West of Hindustani music which include explanations of the music:

The very making of explanations of musical details is a characteristic Western approach to classical music. . . . most North Indian performing artists are not in the habit of thinking about their music, musicologically, much less organizing such information systematically in order to explain it to others. They just do it!48

Karnatak musicians that I know would probably feel that this does not accurately describe their own music, as South Indian music does have a rich tradition of music theory. However, such a concert series as was presented at Wesleyan need not occur in India, due to the audience’s much higher level of knowledge regarding traditional music and dance.

Viswanathan lived in India from 1960-66, heading the music department at the University of Madras; during this period Jon Higgins first came to India and studied music intensively under Viswanathan for several years. Viswanathan returned to the United States in 1967, to study in the Ph.D. program at Wesleyan University.49 He did not teach at this time, as several other Indian musicians were present at one time or another as Visiting Artists: Ramnad Krishnan, vocal [brother of present teacher Ramnad Raghavan]; V. Nagarajan, *kanjira*; V. Tyagarajan, violin;


T. Ranganathan, *mridangam*; and M. Nageswara Rao, *vina*.\(^{50}\) In 1970 Viswanathan and Ranganathan together took teaching jobs at Cal Arts [California Institute of the Arts] in the northern Los Angeles area; there, Viswanathan began to teach Americans again.\(^{51}\)

**Navaratri at Wesleyan**

Returning to Wesleyan in 1975, Viswanathan and Ranganathan revitalized the annual Navaratri festival on campus. Beginning with a series of concerts in the Fall of 1976, it has since been an annual event. Navaratri is an Indian festival celebrating the victory of good over evil, and throughout India this holiday is recognized with grand public festivities and parades. Each of the nine nights of the festival honors a different aspect of the goddess Durga, a manifestation of Parvati, Siva’s consort. Also known as Dassara in Mysore or Durga Puja in Bengal, music and dance are always a part of any Navaratri celebration in India.\(^{52}\) Navaratri was re-created at Wesleyan to provide a framework for concerts and a forum for the academic community to learn about Indian culture.

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52. This section, “Navaratri at Wesleyan,” is drawn from the program book: Joseph Getter, ed., *Navaratri 1976-1997* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 1997), esp. 5-6, written by myself and Kate Wolfe; much of the information is from personal communications with Wesleyan professors T. Viswanathan and Philip Wagoner.
Elements of the origins of Navaratri in India can be found in the ancient period of India’s history, the Indus Valley civilization of the third millennium B.C.E., which predates the epic period of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In the *Ramayana*, the hero Rama invokes the help of Durga when he battles the evil ten-headed demon king Ravana. In the well-known Delhi Ramlila festival, a dramatic production of Rama’s story with music and dance, Ravana’s fifty-foot tall effigy is filled with firecrackers and exploded on the final day of the festival.

Throughout Eastern India, Durga is honored for slaying Mahishasura, the buffalo demon who had taken control of the kingdom of the gods and thus disturbed the universe. During Durga Puja, elaborately decorated clay images are installed in public spaces. There, nightly festival scenes include performances, lights, and sweets and toys for sale. The holiday concludes with a procession of Durga to the river where she is immersed. She is usually portrayed riding a tiger and carrying divine weapons in her many hands, but this calm composure belies Durga’s power and ruthlessness in the face of evil.

Goddesses Lakshmi, Saraswati, and Durga are honored in South Indian Navaratri celebrations. Respectively they embody the qualities wealth, wisdom, and strength. South Indian women celebrating Navaratri construct and exhibit *kolu*, intricate dolls of clay or wood that are assembled in a display that conveys a religious theme or social
commentary. Women visit one another’s homes, feasting and singing songs about the Goddess. One the ninth day educational materials, musical instruments, tools, and vehicles are dedicated to Saraswati in a *puja* [worship ceremony]. Vijayadasami, the tenth day following the ninth night, is dedicated to Durga, and is the day for students to honor their teachers of the arts and to learn a new song or dance.

Fig. 2-11. Wesleyan Navaratri poster detail, including drawing of Saraswati. 1985.

Navaratri was first celebrated informally at Wesleyan in 1967. Two years later Navaratri became a nine-night Indian music festival, organized by
Professor Robert Brown. Artists who performed that year included Ziamuddin Dagar, V. Ranganayaki, Kalyanakrishna Bhagavatar, V. Tyagarajan, L. Shankar, T. Ranganathan, Lalmani Misra, Lakshmi Ganesh Tewari, and T. Viswanathan. These concerts were held on campus and attracted enthusiastic audiences. Brown’s weekly Curry Concerts at his farm home are considered to be the predecessor of the festival. Occasional Navaratri concerts were held in the early 1970s.

Fig. 2-12. Program for M. Nageswara Rao vina concert, Wesleyan Navaratri. Eclectic Society House, Wesleyan University. October 9, 1967.
Navaratri has been an annual event at Wesleyan since 1976, under the direction of faculty members Viswanathan, Ranganathan, and Ramnad Raghavan. Some of the most talented and best-loved musicians and dancers of India have performed in these festivals, including Karnatak vocalists M. L. Vasanthakumari, M. S. Subbulakshmi, T. V. Sankaranarayanan, P. Unnikrishnan, M. Balamuralikrishna, K. V. Narayanaswamy, Jon Higgins, and T. Muktha. Many noted South Indian instrumentalists have appeared in the festival, including Trichy Sankaran, L. Subramaniam, Lalgudi Jayaraman, N. Ramani, Mandolin U. Srinivas, Krishnattam, T. K. Murthy, Palghat Raghu, M. Nageswara Rao, and Ravi Kiran. Dancers T. Balasaraswati, her daughter Lakshmi Knight, Birju Maharaj, Priyamvada Shankar, Swati Bhise, and others have performed as well. North Indian musicians have also performed at Wesleyan over the years, including Nikhil Bannerjee, Shyam Yodh, Hariprasad Chaurasia, A. Kannan, Sivkumar Sharma, Pandit Jasraj, Ali Akbar Khan, Asad Ali Khan, Prabha Atre, Zakir Hussain, Imrat Khan, and Ashish Khan. In 1997, in addition to six concerts the festival included the screening of two Satyajit Ray films, a lecture by Indian studies scholar David Shulman, a lecture by musicologist B. M. Sundaram, and a nagaswaram-tavil troupe performance, with S. N. R. Krishnamurthi, K. G. Somanathan, and T. R. Govindarajan. Each year’s Navaratri features a concert by faculty members, including Viswanathan, Ranganathan, and Ramnad Raghavan.
The following Navaratri program book cover features an illustration of the Sri Chakra, a Hindu Tantric symbol utilized by worshippers of the Goddess, known as Devi. This particular sign is presided over by Kamalamba, the Mother Goddess who resides in the holy city of Tiruvarur, in Tamil Nadu state of South India. The diagram consists of nine concentric patterns, and in worship services the devotee visualizes the Goddess as presiding over the enclosures. Muttuswamy Dikshitar, the famous composer of Karnatak music, was a devotee of Kamalamba and wrote a cycle of songs in praise of her; T. Viswanathan performed one of these compositions in his Navaratri concert that year. By presenting
and explaining information such as this symbol, Navaratri at Wesleyan encompasses more than performances and serves a broader educational purpose.

Fig. 2-14. Program book cover for Wesleyan Navaratri festival. 1997. Design by John Elmore.
Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed the state of South Indian music and dance in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. Karnatak music and Bharata Natyam dance found audiences and a home in American universities, a setting in which they flourished free from some of the concerns of the Indian scene. American students began serious study of these arts (Chapter Six will explore several of their stories). The “pioneers,” such as T. Viswanathan and T. Ranganathan, built the early American audiences through many years of instruction and performance in the United States.

These early artistic activities exist mostly apart from communities of South Asian immigrants, who will be considered in the following two chapters. In the 1950s, the audience, students, and promoters of South Indian music and dance in the U.S. were largely European-Americans. Their interest can be seen as part of general trends in American culture: the search for wisdom in Asian traditions of religion and philosophy, and the questioning of mainstream culture, exemplified by the transformation of Wesleyan’s music department into a place to study music from around the world. Through dispelling their own ignorance about Indian arts, these students were also moving away from the discriminatory and oppressive stances that earlier whites had taken towards Asians.
In 1965, the federal government of the United States passed the Immigration Act, reform legislation which took the significant step of nullifying previous laws that had severely limited opportunities for immigration by non-Europeans.¹ Soon after the reform of its immigration laws, the U.S. witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of people arriving from India and other countries throughout Asia, particularly China, Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, and Korea. More than 27,000 Indians migrated to the United States during the decade of the 1960s, well over ten times the number who came in the 1950s, which had been just under 2,000. This trend continued, as the number of new immigrants to the U.S.

from India increased to a total of 165,818 during the 1980s.\textsuperscript{2} Many of the Indians who have come to the United States since 1965 are highly educated professionals in fields such as medicine, engineering, and computers, and their experiences and backgrounds stand in contrast to that of immigrant Panjabi farmers of the early 1900s, or of colonial period Indian laborers sent to British colonies such as Trinidad and Fiji.\textsuperscript{3}

The post-1965 professional immigrants from India began to establish social, professional, religious, and cultural societies and organizations upon their arrival in the United States. This chapter will focus on several Karnataka music organizations that were formed in the 1970s by immigrants from the Southern region of India, and will examine the

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & No. Immigrants & Year & No. Immigrants & Year & No. Immigrants \\
\hline
1820 & 1 & 1871-80 & 163 & 1931-40 & 496 \\
1821-30 & 8 & 1881-90 & 269 & 1941-50 & 1,761 \\
1831-40 & 39 & 1891-1900 & 68 & 1951-60 & 1,973 \\
1841-50 & 36 & 1901-10 & 4,713 & 1961-70 & 27,189 \\
1851-60 & 43 & 1911-20 & 2,082 & 1971-80 & 165,818 \\
1861-70 & 69 & 1921-30 & 1,886 & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Number of immigrants from India to United States by decade.}
\end{table}


\textsuperscript{3} See Clarke, Peach, and Vertovec, eds., \textit{South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), for analysis of Indians’ experiences as laborers in South East Asia, South Africa, the Caribbean, Fiji, East Africa, the U.S., and the U.K.
Kasturi Association, the Cleveland Saint Tyagaraja Aradhana Committee, the Cleveland Composers’ Day festival, and activities of other groups. These organizations have supported and institutionalized South Indian music and culture within the context of American society. One important and unique type of institution, the Hindu temple in the U.S., will be considered separately in the following chapter. South Asians in the U.S. comprise an extremely diverse group, in terms of social, religious, and personal identity, and in terms of occupation, class, and status. Although this diversity exists, it is beyond my scope here. In this chapter, the groups I will discuss often place Karnatak music at the focus of their activities.

4. Many writers question the creation of stereotypes of South Asian immigrants as either professionals or labourers. For example, from Sunaina Maira and Rajini Srikanth, eds., Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North America (New York: The Asian American Writers’ Workshop, 1996), xviii-xix:

   . . . we thought the time had come to challenge monolithic constructions of South Asia identities and to begin to reveal the complexities and subtleties of class, gender, sexual orientation, national or regional origin, religion, and generation. These nuances needed to be explored, we felt, because of the narrow definitions of South Asian-ness by both the larger society and our own communities. The majority culture is pervaded by stereotypical images of model minority professionals and caricatures of shopkeepers. In South Asian communities, those who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual; or those who work in blue-collar jobs; or those who challenge traditional gender roles are often silenced or rendered invisible.

Aspects of my study address some of these concerns, such as Chapter Five’s analysis of gender, or Chapter Six’s interviews with second generation South Asian American musicians. However, the subjects of the present chapter are generally from elite, conservative, professional groups of South Indian immigrants. I refer to specific individuals when possible to avoid creating stereotypical representations of a group.
Institutions of Culture

In most large cities in the United States and Canada there are a multitude of organizations serving South Asians who reside there.5 These organizations can be thought of as being constituted either by regional affiliation or as a pan-Indian federation. Some groups were created by and for U.S.-settled Indians of a particular region, language, or state of India. For example, the group Kasturi: Kannada Cultural Society of N.E. Ohio draws its membership from Cleveland area Indian-Americans who have their family roots in Karnataka state of Southern India; likewise, Tamil Sangam Michigan (Detroit) and Bharati Tamil Sangam (New York) are for those from Tamil Nadu state, and the Bihar Association of North America (BANA) comprises Biharis in the greater New York Area. Other organizations unite those of a common religious affiliation, such as the Federation of Jain Associations in North America (based in New York), which has a national scope. In contrast, some Indian immigrant organizations unite constituents from several cultural backgrounds, such as the India Association of Greater Hartford, the South Asia Forum (New

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York), and the Association of Asian Indian Women of Ohio.\(^6\)

Indian-American groups of all types serve a variety of purposes for their members, from the promotion and sustenance of Indian arts and culture in the U.S., to the formation of networks Indian professionals of a field or business concern, to the recognition of contributions in areas such as public service and politics. A group’s statement of purpose often clearly shows its intentions: the Association of Asian Indian Women of Ohio states that its goals are:

- to promote educational and cultural excellence,
- to encourage leadership through volunteer opportunities,
- to establish a support network, and
- to encourage families to get involved in community affairs.\(^7\)

Many groups have similar goals, of the creation of networks and the fostering of a sense of community for their members.

Some Indian-American community groups focus their efforts, either in whole or part, on the sponsorship of music and dance events. Thus,

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6. The Indian-American press always carries accounts of the events and people of Indian-American organizations. Reference to the Bihari Association of North America and the Federation of Jain Associations in North America in *India Abroad* (March 15, 1996), pg. IV; reference to South Asia Forum in *India Abroad* (March 7, 1998), 40. The existence of many such groups is also known to me from attending their events, personal communications with many people, and reading flyers posted in places such as Hindu temples and Indian groceries; some such programs and advertisements are found in this chapter. For an example of an event publication, see the program of the India Association of Greater Hartford’s first Indian Independence Day Festival 1997, *Celebrating 50 Years of India’s Independence* (August 8, 1997, Bushnell Park; Hartford, CT: India Association of Greater Hartford, 1997), which features articles and advertisements.

7. Statement of Usha Ahuja, “A Message from the President,” in Sharda Mulgaokar et al., eds., *Davat: A Grand Feast from India* (Cleveland: Association of Asian Indian Women of Ohio, 1991), i. This cookbook was produced in the greater Cleveland area, and includes contributions by several of my music study colleagues.
organizations of South Indians often support Karnatak music concerts, concert tours, lessons, and artist residencies. For example, the Carnatic Music Association of North America (CMANA) has for over twenty years sponsored tours of the U.S. and Canada by Karnatak musicians from India. It also offers for sale over one hundred concert recordings from its archives, and publishes a newsletter and music instruction materials. The organization’s history runs parallel with that of post-1965 Indian-Americans, as CMANA President G. S. Subbiah noted in his address to the Annual General Body Meeting of August 24, 1997:

. . . we can see the growth of the organization as well as the growth of the entire Indian community and the community of Carnatic music rasikas [educated listeners]. Twenty years ago, the Indian community was young and trying to find a foothold in this country. At that time, in order to carry the culture, many groups were founded in order to give Indians a sense of familiarity and belonging. As a part of this general movement, a small, but ardent group of Carnatic music lovers led by Dr. P. Rajagopalan founded the Carnatic Music Association of North America . . .

These last twenty years have not only brought a gradual evolution of CMANA, but also a gradual evolution in the South Indian community in this country. We are not the small struggling community we once were. In fact, we have grown into a more visible and formidable community.


Fig. 3-2. CMANA mailing advertisement for a concert by Prapancham Sita Ram (flute). Venkateswara Hindu Temple, Bridgewater, New Jersey. June 14, 1997.

Other groups present Karnatak music concerts on a more local scale. Tamil Sangam Michigan, for instance, hosted artists on a CMANA tour with their 1993 event held in a Detroit suburb, “A Grand Instrumental Carnatic Music Concert by India’s Foremost Violinist and the
Internationally Renowned Artist, Lalgudi G. Jayaraman.”  

Jayaraman is one of the leading artists of the Karnatak music world, and has toured the U.S. many times. At such events, audience members may specifically request songs from their region of India: “Please, one more Tamil song!” may be called out to the performer, or slips of paper with requested composition titles may be handed to the performers on the stage.

Musical events allow Indians residing in America to experience in performance the music of their cultural background; a concert is a dynamic event can serve as a means of creating identity for its participants, including the musicians, sponsors, hosts, and audience. Participants in such an event experience as a group many elements of Indian culture: sounds, emotions, audience-performer interactions, and the not insignificant pre- and post-concert socializing, an important element of community-building and networking. A musical event possesses the potential to unite those who might not otherwise meet.

Many settings are possible for music concerts, such as rented high school and university auditoriums, temple community rooms, and private homes. The “house concert” is a phenomenon found occasionally


11. I witnessed the audience requesting more Tamil songs at the Middletown Sri Satyanarayana Hindu Temple’s 1997 Tyagaraja Aradhana.
throughout the South Indian community, both in India and the U.S., and is regarded as the best place for the musically sensitive and knowledgeable listener to intimately hear a quality performance. Thus, those attending would interact with other Indian-Americans with similar backgrounds and interests, who for some are old friends (not uncommonly with...

![Chamber Music Society advertisement](Image)

Fig. 3-3. Advertisement for house concert sponsored by the Chamber Music Society of Cleveland. October 30, 1993.

12. Personal communications with various informants at events, and discussion with T. Viswanathan of Wesleyan University.
relationships reaching back to India), but for others may be new acquaintances.

For example, the Chamber Music Society of the greater Cleveland area is an Indian-American music group that presents concerts of Indian art music, often in the private setting of a member’s home. One Chamber Music Society sponsored house concert that I attended was a solo *vina* recital by K. G. Vijayakrishnan, who is from India and was at the time on a concert tour of North America. This Karnatak music concert was attended by a small number of first- and second-generation Indian-Americans, most of whom were Karnatak musicians themselves. The event was held in the music room of Shanti Raghavan’s suburban home. Raghavan, a long-time resident of the Cleveland area who immigrated from India, is one of the few teachers of South Indian classical music in the Cleveland metropolitan area. As an authority on Karnatak music, a local teacher and leader, and a *vina* player herself, she was an appropriate host for the concert.

Karnatak music events can also be useful to organizations that wish to educate their audiences, particularly second-generation Indians, about the music’s history, compositions, context, composers, and theory. A music festival can be a place for Indian-American children to perform pieces they

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have learned. In so doing, they must first adequately practice their song, which instills in them aspects of Karnatak music, such as *tala*, *raga*, *gamaka*, and particular *kriti*; they should also learn about the correct pronunciation of Indian languages and the meanings of the texts, which are rich in Indian themes. Then at the festival, an individual music student will hear the other children’s performances and compositions, helping them to learn new songs, and she will experience singing for an audience, building her confidence in the process.

**The Composers’ Day Festival**

Fig. 3-4. Women singing as a group at the Cleveland Composers’ Day festival. Front row, L-R: unknown, Chaya Swamy, Shakuntala Murthy, and Jayashree (vocalists). Instrumentalists at right: R. Balasubramaniam (*kanjira*), and Nanjundaiah (violin). Drinko Auditorium, Cleveland State University. August 6, 1994.

The Classical Music Composers’ Day has been held annually during most of the past six years in Cleveland, Ohio. It is sponsored by a coalition of groups (Kannada, Telugu, and Tamil associations) and individuals hoping to achieve several goals with this one-day festival, in which they
promote Karnatak music, gather together to perform and listen, and expose their children to their family’s music. Attendees come from a variety of backgrounds and various states in Southern India. The festival centers on the performance of compositions by a range of composers who are selected to show the audience the variety of styles and traditions in Karnatak music.

The years I have attended and performed at this festival about one hundred to one hundred-fifty people were in the audience. Most of the several dozen performers sang one composition unaccompanied. The full-day program of the 1993 Composers’ Day included:

Welcome  
Inaugural Songs  
Individual Singing  
Distribution of Trophies to Children and Teens  
Refreshments  
Instruments  
Vocal Solo [by a featured artist]  
Distribution of Awards  
Closing Remarks  
Vote of Thanks  
National Anthem  
Dinner

14. CMANA holds a “Great Composers’ Day” festival annually in New Jersey. In their newsletter *Sangeetham* 14, no. 1-2 (Spring and Summer), the editor writes: “The Great Composers’ Day and Sangeetha Mela have become CMANA’s way of reaching out to the musical community and giving opportunity to the artists in our community to actively participate in and contribute to general growth of interest in Carnatic Music” (6).

15. Classical Music Composers’ Day, “Classical Music Composers’ Day,” concert program, August 21, 1993 (Cleveland: Classical Music Composers’ Day, 1993). The featured solo artist that day was Shakuntala Murthy, the teacher of myself and many others appearing on the program at the festival. Her career and music is profiled in Chapter Five.
Many elements of this program are common to other events: awards, a focus on children’s activities, a solo recital by a professional musician, spoken remarks in which the sponsors and organizers are acknowledged, patriotic songs from both the U.S. and India, and a pot-luck dinner of delicious South Indian food prepared at home by the attendees.

Fig. 3-5. Violinists performing as a trio at the Cleveland Composers’ Day festival. L-R: R. Balasubramaniam (kanjira), Srinivasan, Nanjundaiah, and unknown (violins). Drinko Auditorium, Cleveland State University. August 6, 1994.

Handouts of printed materials can reinforce the music learning process for Karnatak music festival audience members. At the 1993 Composers’ Day, a five-page packet entitled “Brief Details of the Classical Music Composers of India” was given to the audience as they entered the hall.¹⁶

This information can help people to know the mudra [composer’s signature found in the song text] and thus be able to determine a composition’s composer through recognition of the composer’s poetic name. Additionally, a packet of short biographical sketches of the composers was distributed along with the program. Through it, one can learn of their great acts of religious devotion: “While in prison, not being able to withstand the agony, Ramadasu sang several songs in praise of Lord Rama, [so that He would] bestow mercy on him.”

Furthermore, a puja [religious service] often will be performed during a music festival, in which offerings are presented to portraits of composers, many of whom are regarded as holy saints. Thus, through listening, reading, and offerings, the audience can develop an awareness of past musicians’ admirable qualities, which are suitable for emulation. In conclusion, while serving as social gatherings, South Indian musical events are also places to learn about religious values, music history, and cultural heritage.

Kasturi: Kannada Cultural Society of N.E. Ohio

Kasturi of Cleveland is an organization comprised of Indians whose family origins are in Karnataka state of Southern India, an area that encompasses the cities Bangalore and Mysore. Kasturi presents an annual Deepavali Children’s Program. In India, Deepavali, the “Festival of Lights,” is celebrated in the Fall and involves the lighting of many small oil lamps and setting off of fireworks. It is found throughout India and is known as Diwali in the North. Kasturi’s program is a cultural variety show that focuses on the arts of Karnataka state, and the arts performed by those from that area.
In 1993, soon after I began to study Karnatak music, I participated in Kasturi’s Deepavali program, which was attended by around four hundred Indian-Americans of all ages. They arrived as family groups at the suburban high school auditorium, the rented site of the festival. The performers were mostly children, and they either presented an Indian classical art such as Bharata Natyam dance, demonstrated skills on Western instruments that they had developed in local school band programs, or presented a short group skit on a theme of Indian culture.
Singing of both the United States and Indian national anthems concluded the program, an element common to many such events.\textsuperscript{18}

A variety show produced by Indian-Americans from Karnataka state can serve many purposes, among them providing networking opportunities, forming community-oriented friendships, showcasing their children’s talents, and maintaining cultural heritage. The Kasturi Deepavali celebration served all of these purposes, and had been advertised to parents as a festival that would be a means of teaching their children about their Indian traditions:

\ldots And as always, our children will be the highlight of the program.

Some say it’s because the demon Narakaasura was killed by Lord Vishnu and brought peace to the kingdom. Some say it is to rejoice the home coming of Sita and Rama, so all lamps were lit throughout Rama’s journey. Whatever it may be, please explain to the children and let us keep the tradition of wearing new clothes and burning fireworks, as well as eating and distributing sweetmeats among our family and friends.

\ldots The highlight of the evening will be a variety entertainment program by children, including songs, plays, skits and instrumental music. \ldots All participants will be awarded trophies.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Kasturi: Kannada Cultural Society of N.E. Ohio, Cleveland, “Kannada Kasturi Presents: Deepavali Variety Entertainment Program,” concert program, Brecksville, Ohio, November 20, 1993 (Cleveland: Kasturi, 1993). With another American beginning student, Ben Neubauer and I performed a simple composition of my teacher, Shakuntala Murthy. As students with only a few months of study, and as cultural outsiders, it seemed appropriate that we had been invited for a children’s program.

\textsuperscript{19} Kasturi: Kannada Cultural Society of N.E. Ohio, Cleveland, “The 10th Annual Kasturi Kannada Association Deepavali Celebration,” program advertisement (Cleveland: Kasturi, 1993).
Several important themes that persist throughout many Indian-American groups are seen here: an emphasis on the participation and education of the second generation; maintenance of tradition; focus on the arts; and acknowledgment of the diversity of cultural practices and beliefs within even this small slice of people from South Asia. For Kasturi, Karnataka music is considered to be an important aspect of culture that should be passed on to South Indian children raised in America; music encapsulates the traditions, myths, beliefs, style, and expressive qualities of South Indian culture.²⁰

Fig. 3-8. Kasturi of Cleveland letterhead detail. 1993.

²⁰ Personal communications with Deepavali participants, my music teachers, and others.
The Cleveland Tyagaraja Music Festival

This section will focus on one particular annual event, a festival in honor of a famous composer of Karnatak music, Tyagaraja (1767-1847). Held in Cleveland each Easter weekend for the past twenty years, this event is significant in part due to its popularity: recent attendance was estimated at around 2,500, making the concert series the largest South Indian music event in the world outside of India. In 1997, there were nine days of concerts, attended by people from all over the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. In 1993, I began to take South Indian drumming lessons with R. Balasubramaniam, whom I soon learned is one of the chief organizers of this festival. Over a year of regular visits to his home (1993-94), I took lessons and also observed his efforts in coordinating this event; recently I interviewed Balu (as he is known), from which much of the following is derived.

The Cleveland Tyagaraja Festival serves many of the purposes that were discussed above: it brings together a community, continues and recreates Indian cultural life, presents excellent music, and fosters interest among the second generation and non-Indian Americans. The festival started as a small gathering in the mid-1970s and has grown concurrently with the community’s growing presence and roots in the Cleveland area.

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21. I was introduced to R. Balasubramaniam by my teacher Professor Roderic Knight, ethnomusicologist at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.
and the United States. Known collectively as the Aradhana Committee, a small group of dedicated volunteers works year-round to produce this event. Other principal organizers include V. V. Sundaram, who has returned to Chennai after twenty years of residence in Cleveland; Gomathy Balasumbramaniam, Balu’s wife; and T. (Tom) Temple Tuttle, an ethnomusicologist on the faculty of Cleveland State University, the site of the festival. An *aradhana* is a worship service, in this case for a deceased saint-singer-composer. The celebration has become well-known to lovers of Karnatak music in the United States, who travel from across the country to attend, and in India. In Chennai [formerly Madras], the capital of Karnatak music in India, the festival is known to musicians, and an invitation to perform is actively sought by some amongst them.

![Children singing with their mother counting *tala* at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana. Waetjen Hall, Cleveland State University. April 6, 1996.](image)
The Beginnings of the Festival

R. Balasubramaniam is a member of the large group of Indian immigrants who arrived after 1965. He is from the coastal city Madras [now renamed Chennai], the fourth largest city in India and the capital of the southern state Tamil Nadu. After his education he worked for the Central Government of India in New Delhi for ten years. Balu came to the United States in 1969, to attend graduate school in economics at the University of Cincinnati. In November of the following year he began to work for the City of Cleveland, where he is presently employed. His family joined him here in 1970; his wife Gomathy is also one of the key organizers of the Aradhana, and their two daughters always assist with the festival. Some of the many tasks include coordinating volunteers,

Fig. 3-10. Stage with performers and Tyagaraja shrine, and front row of audience, at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana. L-R: I. Sivakumar (mridangam), S. Nithyasri (vocal), and Embar Kannan (violin). Waetjen Hall, Cleveland State University. April 7, 1996.
arranging travel and accommodations for guest artists, planning and preparing food, publicizing the event, and raising the necessary funds.

Balu’s “first love” is for music, and he has devoted much of his time to producing this festival for the past two decades. Although he had not formally studied Karnatak music as a child in India, he has always loved it and missed it on coming to America. He recalled that there were not many concerts of Indian music available in the U.S. in the early 1970s, and the few that happened were organized by a committee called East-West, made up of members in Cleveland and New York. This group was later renamed Bhairavi and is very active to this day, bringing visiting artists from India on concert tours across North America. Balu has since become a leader of this organization. East-West set up the well-known 1972 tour by violinist Lalgudi Jayaraman and flutist N. Ramani, accompanied by Trichy Sankaran, Ramnad V. Raghavan, and T. Ranganathan. 22 This tour was

22. Tape recordings of this concert series by Jayaraman and Ramani are available in the Wesleyan University World Music Archives, Collection of T. Viswanathan, WMA TVR 166-172. The connection between university ethnomusicology programs and immigrant community music events is strong, but often unacknowledged in scholarly literature. All three of these accompanying mridangam players for this 1972 tour have been employed as university teachers: Sankaran has taught at York University, Toronto, for over twenty years, and began his career there with Jon Higgins. He has also organized a Tyagaraja Aradhana in Toronto. Raghavan has taught at Oberlin College (1975-87) and Wesleyan University (1970-75, 1987-present). The late T. Ranganathan was Wesleyan University’s first Artist-in-Residence (1963-70, 1975-87), and is the brother of T. Viswanathan (dates are from personal communications with Raghavan and T. Viswanathan).

One important aspect of that tour was the artist’s efforts to educate their audience about the music. At the commencement of each piece, a soloist would first announce the name of the raga, next play straight or unornamented notes of the scale, and then play the outline of the raga with gamaka ornamentation. Such information would rarely be given from the stage (or in a printed program) in India.
often cited to me in the course of my research as the beginning of such
touring performance schedules in the United States by visiting top
Karnatak artists.

Balu’s first efforts at organizing concerts utilized the Cleveland Shiva-
Vishnu Hindu Temple as a site. He is also one of the founders and served
as a trustee of this Temple. He stated:

My philosophy is that religion and culture cannot be separated
very much. . . . Culture has social aspects to it, and there is a
community approach to religion. . . . The seat of culture is still
music; it is one of the centers, the forces, of culture. I really
wanted to get music as part of the temple. So, [I took] any
opportunity, artists coming, teachers coming [from India]. In
India there is no religious function without music. Religion is an
expression of the desire to pray, and music is a way to do that.
That will continue here.23

The devotional nature of Karnatak music was thought to be well suited
for programs in new temples in the United States. Indeed, the origins of
the music include devotional singing and dancing in the inner sanctum of
the temple, arts that are offerings in praise of the Gods.24 A bhajan group
was also formed at the temple in the 1970s, to sing these congregational
devotional songs in various Indian languages. Through music, the culture
thus “will continue here,” in the United States.


24. For a discussion of how South Indian dance has been the site of identity conflict, see
Matthew Allen, “Rewriting the Script for South Indian Dance,” TDR (T155, Fall 1997),
63-100. He gives some background on the devotional nature of dance and music.
Percussionist Ramnad Raghavan was sought by several people in Cleveland when he returned to India after holding an Artist-in-Residence position at Wesleyan University, 1970-75. He came back to the United States in 1975 to serve as a music teacher and cultural resource in Cleveland, as well as mridangam teacher at nearby Oberlin College.

Fig. 3-11. Ramnad V. Raghavan in his studio at Wesleyan University. Photo courtesy of Raghavan.

Soon after getting settled in Cleveland, Raghavan had the idea to hold an aradhana for the composer Tyagaraja. Why would Raghavan have selected this particular composer? Tyagaraja is widely regarded as Karnataka
music’s best-loved composer, who has written the sweetest melodies.

Tyagaraja was a pious devotee of Lord Ram, and not a professional
musician; his disciples generally followed him as a spiritual guide and
master, or guru, and not just a source of musical instruction. Balu,
Raghavan’s collaborator in the planning of the first Aradhana in
Cleveland, stated:

Tyagaraja is the most devoted [composer], known for his bhakti
marg [path of devotion]. Tyagaraja . . . was the one who really
brought out God in human form. He had so much devotion that
he could see the vision of Lord Rama. When his wife asked him,
‘who are you talking to?’ he was seeing Rama and [His brother]
Lakshmana appearing before him, because he was so devout. So
that is the unique feature [of his music].

At the site of Tyagaraja’s death in Tamil Nadu, India, on a riverbank in
the small town Tiruvaiyaru, an annual Aradhana is held. This event has
provided the model for the Cleveland festival and other aradhana
s within
India and in other countries: over several days, individuals take the stage
to sing one composition as an offering of respect to Tyagaraja; top artists
perform longer programs; and a large group sings the “Pancharatna Kritis”
[five gems of compositions].

25. R. Balasubramaniam, interview.

26. For a biography of the composer, see William J. Jackson, Tyagaraja: Life and Lyrics.
Madras: Oxford University Press, 1991. With my wife Kate Wolfe, I attended the
Tiruvaiyaru Aradhana in January, 1995, during a period of my studies of Karnatak vocal
music with Neeraja Chandrasekaran in Chennai, India.

27. Such a large group of musicians, up to hundreds at some sites, is very unusual in
Karnatak music. North and South Indian classical music is primarily chamber music,
aside from the performance of these particular compositions at this type of festival.
Raghavan began his work by training people from the Temple *bhajan* group to sing these Pancharatna Kritis, lengthy compositions of moderate difficulty. The first festival was held in 1977, in the basement of a church; it included group singing, individual singing, a concert by a visiting artist, socializing, and food. Thus the idea of having an Aradhana in Cleveland became manifest in an event in which a rich set of cultural signs are employed. Familiar, beautiful Karnatak music is performed by both visiting artists from India and local musicians. Participants must perfect
their performing abilities through months of practice and study prior to the festival. The event includes religious piety and devotion, both in the act of veneration through singing and performing service (volunteer work), and in the recipient of the offerings, a South Indian saint and composer. Refer to CD Track 1 to hear “Endaro Mahanubhavulu,” the fifth of Tyagaraja’s Pancharatna compositions, as sung at the festival in 1996.

**The Community of the Present Festival**

The atmosphere of the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana is very social, yet the focus remains on the music concerts presented by visiting professional musicians (and in some years dancers as well) from India. The first day of the program includes a busy schedule that runs from eight o’clock in the morning until eleven at night or later:

- Prayer & Worship
- Bhajans by Children
- Pancharatna Kritis, Group Singing of Tyagaraja’s Five Best Compositions
- Individual singing of Tyagaraja kritis
- Lunch
- Individual singing of Tyagaraja kritis
- Concert
- Concert

In recent years, over 2,000 people have been attending the concert series, which stretches over five to nine days. The above program may not

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28. For a listing of events, articles, and advertisements, see Aradhana Committee, *18th Year Celebration of Sri Thyagaraja Music Festival*, festival program, April 15-19, 1995 (Cleveland: Aradhana Committee, 1995).
reflect the social nature of the event. People who may have not seen one another since the previous festival greet one another, families and friends are reunited, children play in the lobby, and some people introduce themselves to the artists.

Fig. 3-13. Audience at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana. CSU, April 6, 1996.

For most of the past twenty years the event has been held at Cleveland State University [CSU] in downtown Cleveland. CSU has adequate facilities for the event, including two concert halls and areas for dining, socializing, and vending of recordings and books on music. CSU also has individuals willing to co-sponsor the event. The festival was invited to

29. In 1997, the Aradhana Committee released several CD recordings of performances at the festival, including those of N. Ramani and Mandolin U. Srinivas, leading concert artists of South India. See: N. Ramani, Carnatic Instrumental, Live Concert; N. Ramani and U. Srinivas, Carnatic Jugalbandhi, Live Concert; and Mandolin Srinivas, Carnatic Instrumental, Live Concert (for all: Cleveland: Aradhana Committee, 1997).
CSU by faculty member and ethnomusicologist T. Temple Tuttle, who continues to motivate important institutional support. He writes on what is unique and worthy about the festival:

The Indian tradition of music festivals to honor individual composers (such as Thyagaraja, Purandaradasa, Sastri, and Dikshitar) is kept alive in the West. In some respects, they may embody features which could be well replicated in India.

The Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana, which is in its twentieth year, attempts to maintain many traditions which have been lost in India at similar events. Admission is free to all events, including concerts and several excellent Indian meals: donations support the festival. It is a Cleveland tradition to remove the wrist watches from the performers, so they may perform as long as they wish. (At one memorable concert, a young *vidwan* [learned musician] sang continuously from 7 P.M. until 1:40 A.M.!) We also discourage requests from the audience, so the musical values of the performer and his musical lineage maintain control over the repertoire.

One of the most visible features of our festival is the audience of thousands of dedicated and knowledgeable Carnatic music lovers. They come from all over the States, Canada, Europe, Asia, and even Australia, to participate in the event. But the most unique feature is our requirement that all the *vidwans* who will perform in the five-day event must be present at all concerts, seated in the front two rows. In India, as in the West, top artists seldom perform before more than one or two of their peers. We feel that this had added some degree of intensity to the concerts, and has inspired some young artists to give their very best performances.\textsuperscript{30}

Tuttle here indicates the value of the festival for the musicians who come from India. Balasubramaniam also noted that the social and musical

conditions of the concerts are very much appreciated by the artists, who must attend every concert of the series, seated in the front rows.\footnote{Joan Erdman discusses how a performance in the West may help to boost a South Asian musician’s performing career. While this may be true regarding the Cleveland festival, it seems that the values of the artists are not undermined as she suggests, but rather are celebrated. Joan L. Erdman, “Today and the Good Old Days: South Asian Music and Dance Performances in Chicago,” in \textit{Asian Music in North America}, ed. Nazir Jairazbhoy and Sue Carole De Vale, \textit{Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology}, vol. 6 (Los Angeles: Program in Ethnomusicology, Department of Music, University of California, 1985), 39-58.}

Amateur musicians as well as the visiting professionals are active participants on the stage. Well over one hundred musicians, both local and visiting Indian-Americans as well as the occasional non-Indian, take the stage to render one Tyagaraja composition as an offering in homage to his piety.\footnote{I have performed twice at the Aradhana in Cleveland, singing Tyagaraja compositions in 1994 and 1996. In Connecticut, from 1996 to 1998, I sang or played flute at my local festival, held in April at the Sri Satyanarayana Hindu Temple, Middletown; and in 1998, I played the \textit{tambura} at the Aradhana held at Kala Prasad’s home each January.} Participants in the Aradhana acknowledge another role of the festival, in developing a sense of Indian-American culture and community in the United States. A program book distributed freely at the festival includes informative articles about the music, Indian history, devotion and religion, and the festival itself. In my own contribution, I wrote of the social, religious, and musical aspects of the festival. The Aradhana builds and sustains a community for newer citizens of this country; the Aradhana is a reminder of home, a replication of events that occur in India, a homage to a saint, and expression of religious devotion, and a place for anyone interested to participate. For many participants in
the festival, the act of singing a song by Sri Tyagaraja can be a means of attempting to personify the composer’s attributes of good musicianship and sincere devotion.\footnote{Joseph Getter, “Sri Tyagaraja Festival at Cleveland: Musings of a Music Student,” in \textit{18th Year Celebration of Sri Thyagaraja Music Festival}, ed. Aradhana Committee (Cleveland: Aradhana Committee, 1995), 8-12.}

Other have written about the festival’s role in shaping their sense of Indian identity. Anitha Mohan, a local student, writes:

\begin{quote}
I feel that it is good to keep the Indian culture alive in America, and the people in Cleveland have done this by having the Thyagaraja Festival each year. Seeing so many Indians from various parts of the country makes me feel proud to be an Indian. Each year I look forward to Thyagaraja Festival, not only for the music, but for the people who attend it. It is they who make this yearly event come alive.\footnote{Anitha Mohan, “Thyagaraja Festival: The Experience I Always Remember,” in \textit{18th Year Celebration of Sri Thyagaraja Music Festival}, ed. Aradhana Committee (Cleveland: Aradhana Committee, 1995), 13.}
\end{quote}

This gathering is likely to be the largest group of Indians that most attendees will ever see at once outside of India. They are, for a few days, in a setting that is socially, musically, and culturally very “Indian.” Being at the festival has been called being in “Madras for a day.”\footnote{Statement of T. Tuttle, from stage of Aradhana, April 6, 1996.} The festival is therefore an expression of community for the South Indians who congregate in Cleveland each Easter weekend.

For some participants in the Aradhana, singing on the stage is primarily a musical experience. Groups and individuals must practice...
diligently to learn the difficult compositions that their teachers give them. The process of music study is rewarding in itself, for as one is introduced to new compositions and *ragas* by the teacher, one’s repertoire increases. A solo performance can be a frightening prospect, with the thought that the audience may include well-known professional musicians from India, one’s family and friends, and others from around the country. Some participants perform as a group, which builds and sustains friendships, and develops the musicians’ skills in working together.

Fig. 3-14. Three students of Shakuntala Murthy sing together at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana. L-R: R. Balasubramaniam (*kanjira*), Hema Suresh, Usha Dacha, and Vijaya Goula (vocalists). Waetjen Hall, Cleveland State University. April 6, 1996.

The Cleveland Festival has grown over the years and has received recognition from the wider community. The program books of the Aradhana regularly carry proclamations from the Governor of Ohio and the Mayor of Cleveland declaring the dates as “Saint Thyagaraja Days”:

Whereas, Ohio is proud to be called home by many people of Asian-Indian ancestry—individuals who contribute daily to the vast fabric of America and to the quality of life in the State of Ohio
through government service, science, education, business and industry, and especially the arts and cultural organizations . . . \textsuperscript{36}

Other messages of congratulations are from the Ambassador of India to the United States, and from the co-sponsors of the event, the President of Cleveland State University and the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Cleveland Shiva-Vishnu Temple.

The festival has grown artistically as well, and in 1994 was held concurrently with the world premier of \textit{Jaya Jaya Devi}, a dance-drama with music composed by top-ranking Karnatak musician Lalgudi Jayaraman. This work was produced by the Cleveland Cultural Alliance (founded 1991), a group sharing many of its volunteer organizers with the Aradhana Committee, but with a focus on music and dance events other than the Tyagaraja Aradhana itself.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36} Aradhana Committee, \textit{20th Anniversary of Cleveland Thyagaraja Music Festival}, festival program, March 28-April 6, 1997 (Cleveland: Aradhana Committee, 1997). The quoted passage is from the Resolution of the Governor of Ohio, 2.

\textsuperscript{37} Lalgudi Jayaraman, \textit{Jaya Jaya Devi}, program, World Premier, April 3, 1994, Waetjen Auditorium, Cleveland State University (Cleveland: Cleveland Cultural Alliance, 1994).
Conclusions

This chapter has shown how South Indians who reside in the United States have created social institutions and events over the last three decades that fulfill religious, social, and musical needs. An event such as a concert or music festival can serve to bring together people who are of
various regions, sub-cultures, and generations. Music events are places to express and create an Indian-American identity.

Events such as the Kasturi Deepavali celebration showcase and encourage the musical achievements of Indian-American children. A private house concert allows those who are deeply interested in music to gather on a more intimate level. And the spectacle of the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana combines bhakti [spiritual devotion], social interaction, and music by leading Karnatak artists from India.

At many of these South Indian musical events in the United States, Hindu concepts of devotion, renunciation, and spiritual practice are emphasized. These events reflect the participants’ desire to “continue, not preserve”\textsuperscript{38} their culture in the United States. For some, this awareness and practice of Indian cultural forms arose in them only upon leaving India and settling in the United States. The next chapter on Hindu temples will explore this point more fully.

\textsuperscript{38} Statement of R. Balasubramaniam, interview.
In Hindu temples across North America, aspects of Indian culture and traditions are being enthusiastically brought into new contexts. As post-1965 professional immigrants became settled in the United States and Canada, they formed social networks and cultural institutions, such as the music organizations and festivals discussed in Chapter Two. Some among the Indians residing in America decided to construct Hindu temples. These religious institutions physically embody an expression of Hindu Indian-Americans’ religious faith, provide a place for individual and communal worship practices, and serve as a place of meeting and community activities. Music and dance are among the most important of North American Hindu temple events. Karnatak music and Bharata Natyam dance, South Indian performing arts with a religious and devotional nature, are perceived by temple communities as natural
compliments to the primary temple purpose of conducting religious services.

There are presently about seventy-five Hindu temples in North America, mostly located in major cities. The data in this chapter is drawn primarily from five temples in the United States: the Sri Satyanarayana Temple of Middletown, Connecticut; the Shiva Vishnu Temple of Cleveland, Ohio; the Sri Venkateswara Temple of Bridgewater, New Jersey; the Sri Guruvaayoorappan Sannidhi of Edison, New Jersey; and the Sri Venkateswara Temple of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At these locations I have attended events such as pujas [worship services] and concerts, at three of the temples I have performed South Indian music, and two I have lived near and hence have become more acquainted with their communities. This chapter is based upon my interviews and informal personal communications with members of these temples, my participation in events at these sites, and temple publications, advertisements, and recordings.

This chapter will examine the ways in which a North American Hindu temple is regarded as a center of South Indian religious, community, and cultural activity. I consider the ways in which the temple maintains

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1. The number of North American Hindu temples is from Mary F. Linda, “Constructing Identity: Hindu Temple Production in the United States” (Paper presented at the International Conference on the Hindu Diaspora, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, August 22-23, 1997).
aspects of Indian life in the new context of America, and then examine the performing arts in these temples with a focus on South Indian traditions. I discuss how the arts exist in the setting of a temple space, and at temple-sponsored events in other settings. I will suggest that the Hindu temple in America is both a “home” and a “stage.” It is a place where Indian culture is preserved, continued, performed, and created.

Fig. 4-1. Cover of the Pittsburgh Venkateswara Temple’s publication Saptagiri Vani [Voice of the Seven Hills]. December, 1997.
The Hindu Temple as “Home”

The Shiva Vishnu Temple is Our Temple. It is relevant to every individual in Our Community. It is imperative for everyone to know that the Temple is their home, and a place where they belong.\(^2\)

This statement of the Fountain of Youth organization of the Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple is one of many references to a temple as a “home” for Hindu Indians in North America.\(^3\) A temple is a home for several reasons. The construction and operation of a temple is, for those involved, like building a home for the entire community. Temple activities re-create elements of life from the Indian homeland. One such important element of Indian culture is Hindu religious practice, and a temple’s core purpose is to provide religious services for individuals, families, and congregations. A temple also creates a home because it is a social place, serving as a physical space for community gatherings and events. Performing arts, including South Indian music and dance, are among the most important events at which friendships and social alliances are formed and maintained.

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3. Some speakers at the International Conference on the Hindu Diaspora explicitly stated that Hindu temples in American can be regarded as a “home.” For example, Braj M. Sinha, “Models of Hindu Diaspora: The Canadian Context” (Paper presented at the International Conference on the Hindu Diaspora, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, August 22-23, 1997).
Building the Temple

The founding of Hindu temples in North America reflects the changing status of the first-generation immigrants from India. When many post-1965 Indians immigrated to the U.S., they were graduate students at U.S. universities. Soon, some entered professions in America, working as physicians, engineers, and in other highly skilled jobs. These people consequently became settled in America, and in the process some undertook efforts to create aspects of Indian culture in their new home.

Thus, Hindu temples were built in many American cities with at least several thousand Hindu Indian residents, and in many with fewer. The process of temple building in the U.S. began in the mid-1970s and continues to the present.

Among Hindu temples in America there are many variations in identity, regarding issues such as which deities are installed, which Indians attend the temple, and from where financial and volunteer support comes. Some of the initial efforts in temple building in the 1970s attracted support from across the nation. The “Visitor’s Guide” to the Pittsburgh Venkateswara Temple states:

One of the earliest Hindu temples to be built in the United States, S.V. Temple was constructed at an approximate cost of $925,000 with donations raised from more that six thousand devotees from around the country. Most donors were first generation Indian immigrants who were seeking to maintain ties with their
mother culture. The ground-breaking ceremony for the Temple took place on June 30, 1976.⁴

This temple was one of the first Hindu temples constructed by the post-1965 immigrants, and as such has achieved considerable support. In its most recent annual report, a list of monetary contributors includes North and South Indian names, as well as those of a few non-Indians, from a wide geographic distribution—there are donors’ names listed from nearly every U.S. state and Canadian province.⁵

![Aerial view of the Pittsburgh Sri Venkateswara Temple.](image)

Fig. 4-2. Aerial view of the Pittsburgh Sri Venkateswara Temple. From the Temple’s Visitor’s Guide. 1997.

Each Hindu temple has a religious identity, regarding to which deity the place of worship is dedicated. This identity is determined by those people

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founding the temple, and is generally based upon the worship needs of the temple’s members. Hindu temples in America have for their worship services the same Gods as are found in India. The Pittsburgh temple has a specific sectarian focus: though other deities are also installed in it, the temple’s principal identity is of one particular deity, Sri Venkateswara. This deity’s primary Indian temple is located at Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh (in Southern India); another direct connection between the two temples are the priests who come to Pittsburgh after their training in Tirupati. The Sri Guruvaayoorappan Temple of Edison, New Jersey, a more recently initiated temple-building project begun in the mid 1990s, is another example of a temple dedicated to a single deity from a specific region of South India.6

In contrast, other American-based Hindu temples may intentionally include deities from a diversity of regions and sects of India. The Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple, founded in 1983, houses on one side of its mandap [hall] several cream-color marble deities propitiated by North Indians, while on the facing side of the large hall reside black stone deities familiar to South Indians. Shiva and Vishnu, the principal deities of the temple, are themselves representative of the diversity of the temple’s membership, as these two are at the centers of the two main sects of Hindu

belief. This temple’s members originate from a diverse geographic
distribution across India: the list of trustees includes Northern names such
as Shah, Patel, and Sharma, as well as Southern names like Dravid,
Swamy, and Narayana.⁷

Even before the temple structure can be built, the devotees may
already have begun conducting ritual activities. At the San Marga Temple,
Kauai, Hawai‘i, a “700-pound spadika (quartz crystal) Siva Lingam [has]
received puja daily since 1987,” though the actual structure of the temple
to house it had not yet been built.⁸ Similarly, the Cleveland temple
members began modestly until they could buy property on which to build,
as observed in their chronology:

1985: Rented the location of a closed restaurant at West 120th and
Lorain Road. Sundaram donated Rama Parivar made of wood,
and Sharma brought pictures of deities for conducting pujas, and
the temple as we know it was born! The pujas were conducted by
volunteers—Balu, Dattatreya, Sharma, Sundaram and
Srinivasan. Gomathi Balu, Bhanu Srinivasan and Sumitra
Dattatreya prepared the prasad [blessed food] most Sundays.
About 4 weeks later, a newcomer to Cleveland, Sri
Ramakrishnan who was well versed in puja protocol joined the
group, and started to perform the pujas regularly until 1989. The
group started thinking about a permanent location for the
temple.⁹

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publication of the Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple.

Marga Temple: A traditional Chola-style stone temple carved entirely by hand in India

9. From the welcoming letter of Darshan Mahajan, Chair of the Temple Board of Trustees,
in Ganesha Murthi Prathishta and Temple Inauguration, ed. The Greater Cleveland
Shiva Vishnu Temple (Cleveland: Shiva Vishnu Temple, 1997), [1].
After utilizing the rented restaurant space, the temple was next located on their own property, but in a pre-existing structure that was not in the traditional form of a temple:

Many but not all Hindu temples built in America make use of the design and form of an Indian temple. The Middletown Satyanarayana Temple community purchased land in 1984 and finished initial construction of a temple building in 1989; meanwhile they met in a temporary space. Now that they are settled in a permanent space they own, the temple members have undertaken a fundraising effort to expand their facility, and to create a more traditional appearance for the structure.

A fundraising appeal superimposes an image of their deity, Satyanarayana, over architectural plans for the new building:

Fig. 4-4. Middletown Satyanarayana Temple construction fundraising brochure cover. 1997.

When a temple’s construction is finished inaugural rituals must be conducted, because a Hindu temple in any country may not be used for worship if it has not been properly consecrated. Literature from a temple in the Boston area mentions that the inaugural rituals “anchored” the blessings of the Goddess to the site:

It all began with in 1978 with a desire, a spiritual urge, an uncalculated pure longing for that which all the world’s riches
cannot offer, the softening peace and mystical illumination of a Hindu temple.

Funds flowed forth in an unexpected joyous spirit of devotion. A sylvan site was found and groundbreaking occurred. Twelve years later, the magnificent sanctuary was complete. The copper on the gopurams [towers] glistened in the Atlantic Seaboard spring sun as May, 1990, Kumbhabhishekam rites anchored the ray of the Goddess into the earth and akasha [sky] simultaneously. Daily pujas now assure Her blessings uninterruptedly from this kshetra [sacred place] throughout New England.\(^\text{11}\)

The members of the Bridgewater Venkateswara Temple have also recently constructed a new structure for their temple, in a traditional form:

Fig. 4-5. View of the Bridgewater Venkateswara Temple under construction. October, 1997.

It is a measure of the confidence of temple organizers in their own stability and continued presence in America that they have undertaken

\(^{11}\) Advertisement for Sri Lakshmi Temple, “Goddess of Beauty and Abundance Radiates Shakti in New England,” Hinduism Today 15, no. 3 (March, 1993): 6. This temple, also known as the New England Hindu Temple, Inc., is located in Ashland, Massachusetts. Since 1996, NEHT has collaborated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Heritage of the Arts of South Asia (MITHAS) program in sponsoring concerts of Indian art music of both the Hindustani and Karnatak genres.
the project of building Hindu temples. A Hindu temple is a home for the deities that are installed there, and they must not be abandoned or neglected. The Cleveland Temple builders went to India to receive blessings from a highly respected religious leader:

[Founder] Sharma took the [architectural] drawings to Kanchi Kamakoti Sankaracharya to get his blessings. Sankaracharya even suggested building a temple for Rama, the forgiving God as opposed to Shiva and Vishnu, who require strict adherence to rituals! Sharma assured him that the group would be able to perform the pujas as required . . .

The founders’ assurance was a result of the spiritual—and financial—commitment of a core group of supporters for the project; the temple members also have a commitment to continued residence in the Cleveland area. Many American Hindu temples have recently expanded their facilities: the Middletown, Pittsburgh, and Bridgewater, New Jersey, temples were each involved in the construction of important new facilities in the past year, activities that require a great amount of volunteer administrative and fundraising work, and long-term stability in an American home.

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12. From the welcoming letter of Darshan Mahajan, Chair of the Temple Board of Trustees. In *Ganesha Murthi Prathishta and Temple Inauguration*, ed. The Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple (Cleveland: Shiva Vishnu Temple, 1997), [1].
Worship Activities in Temples

The top priorities of a Hindu temple, in the United States or any country, are to house a deity and perform religious services. In American Hindu temples, religious activities include temple inauguration rituals, devotees’ life-cycle rituals such as weddings, and daily and seasonal worship of various Gods and Goddesses. Daily events may include the recitation of texts in praise of a deity, along with offerings of items such as incense, flower garlands, and holy water. A typical daily puja is the recitation of Vishnu Sahasranamam, the chanting of the one thousand names of Vishnu. Weekly services may include abhishekam, the anointing of a murti [iconic image] with sacred substances, for various deities such as Venkateswara, Ganapati, Krishna, Ram, Siva, Durga, and Nataraja.13 The temple schedule frequently corresponds to typical U.S. work schedules; thus daily services will be held at 6 or 7 P.M., and weekend events will be at 10:30 or 11 A.M., in order to allow more people to attend. Temple members usually receive through the mail a printed calendar of dates, times, and suggested donations for such events; some temples

13. For an example from a temple calendar of events, see Hindu Temple and Cultural Society of United States, Inc., Sri Venkateswara Temple (Balaji Mandir) and Community Center, Calendar of Events (April-June, 1997): 18.
advertise their services on the internet or in print:

![Image of a Vedic ritual advertisement](image)

Fig. 4-6. Advertisement for a Vedic ritual at the Hindu Temple of Calabasas, California. From *Hinduism Today* (October, 1993): 23.

The regular schedule of a temple may attract a small group of worshippers familiar with one another. At a temple such as the Middletown Satyanarayana Temple, these devotees are likely to be people from the local area (including New Haven and Hartford, Connecticut) and
they may already know each another well. At some other temples, a larger portion of the attendees may be visitors from outside of the immediate area. For example, the Pittsburgh Venkateswara Temple attracts people from all over the East coast, Midwest, and beyond; on an average Saturday afternoon the parking lot is full of cars from out of state. Obviously, in such cases not all of the attendees will not be acquainted with each other, though local members will be present as well.

Temples also perform seasonal and irregular worship services in addition to routine events. The Pittsburgh Temple calendar lists Ugadi [New Year of the Telugu and Kannada South Indian cultural groups], Jayanti [birthdays] of Gods and Goddesses, the holiday Navaratri, and processions of deities around the temple building. Such events will usually bring a larger number of devotees to the temple—hundreds may be present for such functions. Often larger events are scheduled for a full weekend day, and may include a cultural program of music, dance, and skits. Vegetarian food is served as well, prepared as a “pot-luck” by individual volunteers who are usually women from the temple membership.¹⁴ Snacks and meals from the temple kitchen are served to

¹⁴ In a temple publication that I quote on pg. 116 (beginning, “1985. Rented the . . .”), the puja [worship service] is described as being conducted by five men, while the prasad [blessed food] is prepared by three women. Such gender roles are common in Indian society; women are generally not permitted to officiate at Hindu services.
program attendees, and people eat together while seated in chairs or on the floor in a large room within the temple complex.

Fig. 4-7. Lakshmi Puja, Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple. July 15, 1995.

It is important for temple priests to perform Hindu rituals in the correct manner. The Pittsburgh Temple states in its annual report that its priests’ skilled services help to invoke the deities’ blessings for the devotees:

S.V. Temple, Pittsburgh follows the temple texts called Pancharatra agamas which consist of 108 samhitas (collections). The Agamas state that Narayana, the eternal Divine Being, should be worshipped in the Archai Rupa (Iconic form) in temples and homes. The Hindu devotee believes that Divine Power has manifested itself in the Murti (Icon). Major religious events like Kumbhabhishekam are performed to re-energize the Murti with the Divine Power, which can either be diluted or lost due to transgressions committed unknowingly by the priest or devotees. Worshipping the Archai Avarata as Hari [a manifestation of God] gives the devotees access to God and His Power.

. . . Agamas’ rules require a temple priest to serve and act as an intermediary between the worshipper and God. . . . Priests are integral and backbone of any temple. They come from families
with temple priesthood as their traditional occupation and learn their skills from young age. S.V. Temple is proud and privileged to have five energetic and dedicated priests. . . . All these priests hail from Southern India. The priests permanently reside at S.V. Temple premises. Their diligence and devotion is appreciated by all visitors to the Temple. All the daily and weekly rituals are performed by these priests.15

Whether in India or elsewhere, orthodox Hindu rituals must be performed accurately by priests. Additionally, in India it is customary that rituals are performed at the correct time and date. However, in the United States the temple schedule is often adjusted to suit local lifestyles, and an event may be shifted to a weekend afternoon of the correct week. Thus more devotees may attend the services.

Events such as weddings, a new car puja, and brahmopadesam [receiving of sacred thread by a higher-caste boy] are intended to fulfill members’ needs rather than directly serving the resident deity. These services may take place on the premises of the temple or at the devotee’s home. As in India, weddings in particular serve to bring together a multitude of family and friends who may not have seen one another in some time, and are always events with music. Weddings may include the playback of recordings of South Indian classical nagaswaram-tavil [oboe-horn and barrel drum] ensembles, an essential sonic component of a South Indian wedding. Women’s weddings songs may also be heard at U.S. Hindu temple weddings.

**Youth Groups**

Hindu temple youth groups fulfill the important task of educating and involving second-generation Americans. Many temples have formed youth groups for elementary, middle, and high school students in the temple. To get students interested in the temple, the youth group may sponsor a fun event that appeals to the children. For example, the Cleveland Temple’s Fountain of Youth group invites its prospective members to “come and join this fun group. Learn about your heritage and get involved in the community.” Soon after the group was formed in 1997, one of their first events was a dance featuring a DJ and modern popular Indian dances Raas, Garba, and Bhangra.

Hindu temple youth groups also get involved in the construction of temple facilities. At the Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple, the youth group is raising construction funds and erecting donative inscriptions. The entrance to the new temple is an East-facing door, correct according to Sanskrit texts on temple construction, yet difficult to reach due to a site slope downhill to the East with parking on the West end of the building. An architectural solution was found in a pedestrian bridge that spans the walkway to the temple doors. At the entrance to the bridge, a red stone plaque bears this inscription in gold capital lettering:

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Bridge to Our Heritage

In the name of community and for the glory God, this bridge is erected. The efforts of hundreds and the generosity of thousands have made this edifice possible. Inscribed in the granite walls of the bridge are the names of the thousands of men, women, and children who comprise our community, and who have contributed to the achievement of this lofty ideal. It is only by passing over this bridge and through these names that we realize the importance of its destination. The bridge to our heritage is the link between our modern Western lifestyle and the rich religious and cultural roots of a time and place whence we came. Each member of our community owns a piece of this temple and will forever know it as a place they may call home.

Fountain of Youth 26 October 1997

The youth group has raised funds for the new temple building, which was finished in 1997. Their contributions are set in stone for all members and visitors to see, and to encourage the youths’ continued involvement.

Temple youth groups are often involved in educational programs, and children receive instruction in Hindu philosophy, belief, practice, and history. Indian languages are taught at the temple, including Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Sanskrit, or whatever is important to the local community. Such programs may function somewhat like an American Christian Sunday school, with a weekly meeting taught by a parent or teacher from within the temple community. The students are often second-generation

17. Inscription at the entrance to a bridge from the parking lot to the East entrance, Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple.

18. I attended such a class on the Hindu epic Ramayana at the Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple, December 28, 1997. This was an ongoing class for elementary through high school children.
Indian-Americans. For them, these religion and language courses may be a significant source of information about their heritage, beyond what is learned at home.

Hindu Indian immigrants can thus utilize the temple as an extension of the home, to educate their children about their cultural heritage. Parents think of the “temple as a vehicle for transmission” of culture to children, according to Braj Sinha at the International Conference on the Hindu Diaspora. The result is that children can discover themselves at the temple, as Mary Linda noted, also at this conference. The Pittsburgh Temple Indian Youth Organization (IYO) states as its purpose:

Its primary objective is to promote the integration of Indian Youth in American community while bestowing a better understanding of the Indian culture and heritage upon its members. . . .

Activities of IYO every year include: monthly meetings, volunteer work during major religious functions and long weekends at the Temple, Temple clean up day in May, graduation Pooja May-June, [and] Youth Camp July-August.

This youth group is governed by the Temple and led by adults from among the membership. The group seeks to instill in the children an

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awareness of Indian culture and of Hindu identity and values. This is accomplished with activities like performing acts of service for the deities and community, cleaning the temple, volunteering at festivals, and fundraising for charitable purposes. Students’ achievements such as graduation are celebrated. An intensive Summer program combines yoga, meditation, and studies of Hindu saints with sports, music instruction, and crafts. Finally, Indian-American children are likely to be able to study classical music and dance at their local Hindu temple. The next section will focus on musical activities at American Hindu temples.

The Hindu Temple as “Stage”

The preceding section presents information about the role of Hindu temples in the cultural and social life of Indians in North America. Now I will turn more specifically to examples of South Indian music and dance occurring in these temple settings. By first noting the great importance of the temple as a vehicle for the continuation culture, the prominence of the performing arts in temples can thus be seen as an indication of the significance of music and dance for Indians in the United States. A concert stage or performance hall is a good metaphor for what the temple is transformed into temporarily at a Karnatak music event.

From the early days of North American temple activity, music has played an important role. In the mid 1970s, several years before the
founding of the Cleveland Temple, people in the area had formed a bhajan group. A bhajan is a congregation or solo devotional song, composed in one of many Indian languages. Bhajans are typically sung in a call and response manner and are accompanied by harmonium [small bellows organ], dholak [double-headed barrel drum] or tabla [pair of drums], handclapping, and small cymbals. In 1997, at the time of the inauguration of a new temple building, the Cleveland Temple hosted six local bhajan groups as part of the ceremony. Each group accompanied a particular deity in a procession that transferred the icons to the new facility. Thus, devotional singing was included at a key ritual moment of the temple.

Together with bhajan styles, the classical traditions of Indian music and dance have been presented frequently and prominently at Hindu temples. The Pittsburgh Venkateswara Temple 1997 annual report’s first item is a summary of religious events at the temple, and is immediately followed by what could be the second most important facet of the temple, the

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23. The Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple, Ganesha Murthi Prathishta and Temple Inauguration (Cleveland: Shiva Vishnu Temple, 1997), [6].
activities of the Cultural Committee:

Our Cultural Committee . . . organized several programs that complemented the religious activities of the Temple. There were several good programs by eminent and promising artists from both India and the United States. [Dance-drama] Lakshmi Prabhavam, produced by [chitra vina artist] Sri Ravi Kiran and choreographed by Smt Radha was arranged during the Maha Yagam celebrations [for peace and prosperity]. Other noteworthy programs during the year included [Karnatak] vocal concerts by Smt Jayashree, Sri Balaji Shankar, Sri Santhana Gopalan, Hyderabad Sisters and Smt Sudha Raghunathan. Aradhana Days honoring great composers Sri Tyagaraja, Sri Annamacharya, Sri Purandaradasa and Sri Swathi Thirunal were celebrated with enthusiasm by music lovers and devotees.24

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Clearly the organizers believe that Karnatak music and Bharata Natyam dance are very appropriate items for Temple programs, for they hosted several prominent artists from India that year.

Why would a temple have a concert of music? The answer is simply that the performing arts presented by temples are religious in nature. Most of the repertoire of South Indian art music and dance is religious in content and context. The origins of many Indian arts are found in performances held in temples that were considered to be offerings to the deities.\textsuperscript{25} However, the history of this religious practice of offering song and dance is complicated. Due to forces such as colonialism, urbanization, and new media like radio, dramatic shifts in the patronage, performers, and audiences of the classical performing arts have occurred in the last century. For example, the marriage of female temple performers to deities, once common, was made illegal earlier this century, thus disrupting the careers of many artists. Today’s classical Indian music and dance also has roots in private performances at the courts of rulers and kings, common until the end of the last century. To demonstrate the tension between performing for the king and for God, some of the saint-composers popular with audiences today had refused to perform for kings, so as not to taint

\textsuperscript{25} Saskia Kersenboom-Story, \textit{Nityasumangali} (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).
their devotional activity with worldly crassness.\textsuperscript{26} Ironically, this
overlooks the conception and treatment of deities as royalty.\textsuperscript{27}

Nonetheless, for today’s audiences, South Indian classical performing
arts are devotional. In fact, some would say that “all . . . elements of the
Indian culture are connected to the Vedic religion,”\textsuperscript{28} as is stated in a
temple publication that specifically describes music and dance as being
connected to the ancient Vedas [sacred texts, c. 1500-900 B.C.E.]. The
training of a musician is tied to religious practice, in that how one must
study under the guidance of a music guru [master and teacher] is like a
relationship to a spiritual guide. A great attainment for a musician is to
achieve a religious experience through performance. The religious practice
of \textit{bhakti} [devotion] is well-known and respected by Hindu Indians. For
example, it is assumed that prospective performers would understand that
their application to perform at the Pittsburgh Temple will be accepted only
if it meets “the usual devotional standards.”\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Classical Music Composers’ Day, Untitled packet of composers’ biographies, Cleveland, OH: Classical Music Composers’ Day, 1993.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Shiva Vishnu Temple, “Vedic Heritage Teaching Program,” \textit{Bhakti} (January/February, 1998): [5].
\item \textsuperscript{29} Sri Venkateswara Temple, \textit{Saptagiri Vani} 28 (December, 1998): 26.
\end{itemize}
Song texts for performance of Karnatak music are almost always religious. They can be expressions of bhakti marg, the path of devotion to the goal of liberation.\textsuperscript{30} The story of composer and saint Tyagaraja (1767-1847) is well known for his devotion: he sang with such bhakti to the deity Lord Rama that He appeared before the singer. This scene is frequently visually depicted, and is reproduced on the program cover of the Cleveland Tyagaraja Music Festival (Fig. 3-12).\textsuperscript{31} Approximately seven hundred of Tyagaraja’s compositions survive, most in praise of Rama. An example of Tyagaraja’s verses that express the singer’s longing to see the God is drawn from William Jackson’s volume of translations:

\begin{flushright}

Music was considered to be not only entertainment but also a source for one’s spiritual growth and a means for raising one’s consciousness from a merely mundane level to higher levels of contemplation. An ancient sage, Yajnavalkya, is quoted as saying, “a person well versed in playing the instrument Vina, having deep knowledge of the microtones and the rhythm, reaches the heavens without any effort!” (451)

\end{flushright}
Is it possible to see your beauty?

Your mirror-like cheeks and shining face
Is it possible to see your beauty?

Your feet, which immortals worship,
Your hands, which give fearlessness,
Your delightful body, which puts
the love god to shame
and is adored by Siva
who is the love god’s foe
Is it possible to see your beauty?
Your scarlet berry lips
Your chest decked out with vakula flowers
Your hand holding the kodanda bow
and the arrow
Your body is like an emerald
Is it possible to see your beauty?

Your subtle laughter, the hair
on your forehead,
And what’s more, the clarity
of your eyes—
Lord praised by Tyagaraja
and all—this kind
Of beauty of yours
is it possible to see?\(^{32}\)

Tyagaraja’s compositions are so well known and deeply loved that the most important music festivals at Hindu temples are *aradhanas* [worship services] for him. Chapter Three presents the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana, and here I will discuss the festival at the Middletown

Satyanarayana Temple.

The Middletown Temple produces an Aradhana that honors both Tyagaraja and Purandaradasa, another composer of bhakti songs. An Aradhana is held each April in the lower level community room-cum-performance hall of the temple. On a recent festival held on April 26, 1997, around 300 people attended, including 25 students of T. Viswanathan from neighboring Wesleyan University. The event began with a puja to icons of the composers and their favored deities of whom they wrote their lyrics, including Rama. A group sang the “Pancharatna Kritis,” the five best-loved compositions of Tyagaraja, and then children performed simple compositions. Adults and Wesleyan students next performed individually and in small groups. These performances by community members occupied about six hours, and were followed by a two and one-half hour recital by visiting professional Karnatak artists, vocalist Lalitha G. J. R. Krishnan and accompanists Vittal Ramamurthy and J. Vaidynathan. Finally, a pot-luck South Indian vegetarian meal was served to everyone at the conclusion of the day’s music.

The Middletown Temple Aradhana possesses a very festive feeling, and it was obvious that many in the audience know each another well. This Aradhana differs in an important way from the event in Cleveland, in that the Middletown festival draws an audience primarily from within a fifty-mile radius, with most performers being local musicians; Cleveland attracts audiences from around the world and features as many as twenty to thirty artists from India. In both cases, the musical event is also a religious and social event. In Middletown, the activities revolve more around the music of local people.
Temples also sponsor other musical events. Occasional concerts of classical music and dance are held, visiting *kathakalakshepam* [singing and story-telling] and *bhajan* singers perform, and music and dance classes are offered. In most cases the content of the art is religious. One exception of which I am aware is that during some wedding functions held in temples, secular film music may be performed and danced to, though this would not happen in front of the deities’ icons. At weddings at Hindu temples in the U.S., the ceremony may include the singing of wedding songs by women. The sound of a *nagaswaram-tavil* [double-reed horn and barrel drum] ensemble is an essential sonic component of a marriage; given the unavailability of such performers in the U.S., a cassette tape recording played in the background often serves as a substitute. The
celebrations may also include an entertainment variety show, with Bharata Natyam and folk dancing, and Karnatak and _filmi_ songs.\(^{34}\)

Middletown’s temple is always a participant in Wesleyan University’s Navaratri festival (described in Chapter Two). In 1997, the concluding _puja_ of the festival was held at the temple, rather than the usual campus site, to promote a partnership between the two entities. Students and community members had their musical instruments and manuscripts blessed in the Vijayadasami Puja, shown below:

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34. These statements are based on my own observations.
Conclusions

Hinduism is not a single system of belief. It may be viewed as a conglomerate of various local, ethnic practices with pan-Indian movements and religions. Some state that Hinduism is a term given by outsiders, such as Muslim rulers (12th-19th centuries) or British colonial authorities (18th-20th centuries). Although it encompasses a variety of deities, beliefs, and practices, Hindu religion can nonetheless serve as a force uniting Hindu Indians in North America. The Hindu religion

“functions as the primary identity maintenance mechanism” for Indian immigrants, according to Braj Sinha.  

Naturally Hinduism undergoes change when it is practiced in the United States. People make do with the resources available, and many groups begin by meeting in small numbers in devotee’s homes. Temples are built strictly according to the direction of sacred texts, but the temples must meet local building codes and may be built by non-Hindu construction contractors. The schedule of services is often shifted to the weekend to accommodate devotees’ work schedules and American lives, a change that has been termed a “protestantization” of Hindu religious services in its move away from absolutely strict orthodoxy. Sinha also noted that the concept of the temple as “home” is not a usual component of Hindu temple activity in India. There, temples are found in many places, and one need not travel far to worship; and in India the conception and needs of a “community” are radically different.

Karnatak music is a natural component of temple activities because it is devotional. However, this observation suggests some further questions


38. Harold Coward, “The Hindu Diaspora in Western Canada” (Paper presented at the International Conference on the Hindu Diaspora, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, August 22-23, 1997).
about the nature of religion and music in Indian-American life. Why is bhakti considered as the prime means of attaining religious liberation? What role does caste [ritual status; varna and jati] identity play in temple communities? Why have certain composers and performers become favorites? Such issues are beyond the scope of this project yet their exploration would inform further study on South Indian performing arts in the United States. The answers to these questions are likely to be found at least partially in India, the source of the music and its history.

Music can be seen as helping to shape identity for first- and second-generation Indian-Americans. The musical theory, history, styles, repertoire, and artists are apart from mainstream American music. By maintaining and learning about the performing arts, Indians in America create their sense of cultural identity.
This chapter focuses on South Indian teachers of Karnatak music who reside in the United States.\textsuperscript{1} Their work is meaningful and important to contemporary South Indian-American life for many reasons. Karnatak music teachers act as catalysts in producing events for the South Indian immigrant community, gatherings that facilitate communication between people and sharing of music. Through performances, music lessons, and relationships with students, teachers are responsible for the transmission of both artistic and social aspects of South Indian music and culture, to first- and second-generation Indian-Americans and others. Activities of music teachers are, for some, a significant component in the construction of an Indian identity in the U.S. Karnatak music teachers fill an important

\textsuperscript{1} In the section of Chapter Six concerning non-Indians who study, perform, and teach South Indian performing arts, essays by non-Indian American teachers of Karnatak music will be considered.
role in American society, to which they must often adapt their teaching methods and goals in order to suit local conditions and expectations of students.

An understanding of the traditional Indian concept of the guru is important for grasping the contents of this chapter. A guru is a guide, teacher, master, authority, and respected leader.² Her or his counterpart is the shishya, the disciple, student, and devotee. In India, many forms of knowledge, such as art music or Hindu spiritual practice, can be transmitted via this relationship. Transmission is “oral,” directly from one person to another through personal contact. The lineage of transmission is termed a parampara.

Karnatak musical technique, repertoire, and style are transmitted from guru to shishya. In this traditional Indian education system, it is important that students recognize their guru as the source of their abilities, knowledge, and any resulting prosperity. Often their relationship is exclusive, in that ideally a student should study with only one teacher, either for a lifetime or at least at any one time. Often a performer is discussed in terms of her guru, particularly concerning musical style and expression. For professional musicians, training traditionally begins in

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childhood, involves performing chores and acts of service for the teacher, and requires the student to be hard-working and humble.

Many forces have changed and challenged the guru-shishya-parampara system of music education in India. At present, many children are learning Karnatak music casually without making a serious commitment to a particular teacher. The establishment of university music departments means that students may study music in the new setting of a classroom. New media such as tape recordings have allowed students to readily hear and analyze the music of their guru and of other musicians.\(^3\) Notation of compositions has allowed students to learn from printed books rather than only directly from teachers. Pressures of contemporary life, such as the need to excel at school and find employment, curtail a student’s ability to focus on learning music from a guru through childhood. Today, few students live with their teachers in childhood, as was more common for serious music learning in the past. In fact, aspects of this traditional system have largely disappeared today, as has been noted by many writers and

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Despite these changes, Karnatak music education continues at present in new forms, such as group lessons in classrooms. Kuppuswamy and Hariharan note that music education’s goals should be “the development of the four C’s: Culture, Creativeness, Concentration and Comradeship.” In their book on classroom music instruction, they also write of the desirable qualities of a teacher:

By far the most dynamic single factor in determining the progress of the students and ensuring their successful music experience is the teacher himself—his attitude, his goals, and his teaching skills.6

Teachers are an important part of Karnatak music in the U.S. A student of Karnatak music in the United States will inevitably need to establish and define a relationship with a teacher. They need to shape their roles to suit American conditions, in that a student’s success depends on the ability to

4. For example, sitar maestro Ravi Shankar has written of the tradition music education system for Hindustani musicians of North India. He notes in My Music, My Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 13-14:

A beautiful system is fading: The basis of our ancient system, known as guru-shishya-parampara—the continuity of tradition through master to disciple—seems to be disappearing today, obscured by the fast-moving mechanical and electronic age. . . . Patterns of living have changed, and now we must sincerely try to find a new way for the essence of our ancient tradition to be maintained and passed on.


find a teacher, establish a relationship, create opportunities for study and performance, and integrate music study into their life.

In what follows, I discuss how teachers of Karnataka music in the U.S. continue to utilize some of the traditional methods of teaching, while also helping to create a new musical culture in the American context. I will examine the careers, methodologies, and activities of two teachers of South Indian music in the U.S., Shakuntala Murthy and Kala Prasad, women who have immigrated from South India to the U.S.\textsuperscript{7} Their music making and teaching is vital and touches the lives of numerous people.

\textbf{The Presence of the Teacher}

Before I turn to the two teacher profiles, I will first introduce three themes regarding teachers of music and dance in Indian-American communities. Here I will consider teachers’ thoughts on acting as a link to Indian culture for Indian-Americans; advertisements for teachers; and the phenomenon of the teacher who visits temporarily from India. From the published sources I discuss one may begin to reach an understanding of

\textsuperscript{7} Several teachers are included elsewhere in this thesis, and accounts of their careers and contributions will not be restated here. Chapter Two includes T. Viswanathan; Ramnad Raghavan’s work is discussed in Chapter Three; and several non-Indian Americans are found in Chapter Six.
the presence and role of an Indian arts teacher.\footnote{For a selection of teachers of the diaspora, see “Exponents Abroad,” in Sunil Kothari, 
*Bharata Natyam* (rev. ed., Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1997), 218-233; and for an account 
of one dance teacher, see Rasesh Thakkar, “Portrait of an Indian Dancer in Canada: 

*The Teacher as a Link to Indian Culture: Shanti Raghavan*

A long-time resident of the area of Cleveland, Ohio, Shanti Raghavan
has been teaching Karnatak music for a number of years. In the
metropolitan Cleveland area she is one of only a few persons who offer
lessons in classical South Indian music. Therefore, she is sought out for
music instruction by members of the South Indian-American community,
often by immigrant parents seeking lessons for their second-generation
children. Raghavan is a performer on the instrument *vina* [plucked string
instrument with frets, wooden body, and gourd resonator], and she teaches
both *vina* and vocal music. In addition to working with Indians and their
children, she has also taught some non-Indian Americans.

Shanti Raghavan wrote an essay reflecting on her teaching experiences
in the United States that was published in the program book of the
Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana music festival. She begins by noting that
she did not expect to become involved in music teaching:

> A few years ago, when I agreed to teach Veena [*vina*] to one child,
> I never dreamt that I would be initiated into teaching music so
unexpectedly and that it would become such an important part of my life.9

Such an experience of being drafted to act as a teacher may not have happened to her in India, where numerous professional teachers are available. In Cleveland there was a dearth of Karnatak music teachers, especially after the departure of Ramnad V. Raghavan [no relation] to Wesleyan University in 1987. Thus Shanti’s musical skills, which she had learned growing up in India, were in demand to her community.

Raghavan offers her views on the contrast between teaching Karnatak music in American and Indian settings. The key differentiating factors she identifies are amount of exposure to the music, frequency of lessons, parental involvement, and language ability. In India, she writes, a music student would have the advantage of exposure to music performances on a more frequent basis than is possible in the U.S., because in India there are many concerts as well as frequent events like weddings and religious rituals that include music. Her students in the U.S. might only be able to take lessons infrequently, due in part to parents not having placed a sufficiently high enough priority on their children’s practice and attendance of lessons. Second-generation Indian-American children grow up in an environment in which the Indian languages used in the song

9. Shanti Raghavan, “Teaching Carnatic Music In USA,” in 18th Year Celebration of Sri Thyagaraja Music Festival, ed. Aradhana Committee, [32] (Cleveland: Aradhana Committee, 1995). All following uncited quotations in this section of this chapter are also drawn from this source.
texts may be “almost foreign to them,” hence more attention must be
given to pronunciation in her lessons in the U.S.

Raghavan cites participation in the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana as an
impetus for her students to practice and prepare their music. Raghavan
writes,

The Thyagaraja Festival has been an important event every year
for the children. Individual participation makes them strive for
perfection as it tests their ability. Group participation is a lot of
fun, improves confidence levels, and is a great motivation.
Watching other children of their own age perform helps to keep
their interest in learning alive.10

The study of Indian music serves as a means to achieve personal
improvement in areas beyond the music itself; through practice, children
learn the value of daily disciplined work on a difficult project. An event
like this festival also presents an opportunity for second-generation
children to take part in Indian life: “Participation in Indian functions is
one of their links to Indian culture.” When Indian-American children
attend and sing in a Karnatak music festival they connect themselves with
their South Indian cultural heritage.

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10. Shanti Raghavan, “Teaching Carnatic Music In USA,” in *18th Year Celebration of Sri
Thyagaraja Music Festival*, ed. Aradhana Committee, [32] (Cleveland: Aradhana
Committee, 1995).
Advertisements for Teachers

There are many print publications that serve Indian-American communities. One may find at well-stocked magazine stores and at Indian groceries titles such as *News-India Times, India Abroad, India Journal, India Light, India Currents, India West, Desi Talk,* and *The Lotus*. In many of these Indian community publications there are advertisements for a wide range of services and goods: employment, sale of property and businesses, religious instruction and services, *yoga* classes, astrological calculation, wedding supplies, matrimonials, financial services, travel agents, and restaurants. There are also advertisements for teachers of the arts, including music and dance. Additionally, announcements and advertisements for Indian music and dance recitals are printed.

In the larger sphere of South Indian performing arts, generally instruction in only the classical traditions is available from those teachers who advertise in community publications. Particularly, many teachers place advertisements for their schools of Bharata Natyam dance.\(^{11}\) However, for North Indian music there are advertisements for teachers of “classical, semi-classical & light music,” and performers of “Filmi songs, Geet, Ghazals, Bhajans, Folk, etc.”\(^{12}\) There are also advertisements for Kathak, a classical dance genre of North India. The North Indian arts that

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11. *India Currents* 11, no. 7 (October, 1997): 47.

are advertised are thus of a wider variety of genres than the South Indian arts. This difference may be attributable to several factors: varying economic and educational levels of different Indian immigrant populations; a South Indian perception of greater prestige and importance associated with the classical arts; the background of teachers who have immigrated to the U.S.; and the availability of a teaching pedagogy for a particular form.

In a majority of recent advertisements, dance teachers are women and music teachers are of both sexes. For example, in *India Currents* there are advertisements for “Singer, Old and New Film Songs,” by Arshad Ali, a male, and for “Well-known playback singer from India” Veenapani Rastogi, a female. Elsewhere in this monthly magazine, six women advertise their classical dance schools, opposite an announcement of a classical dance concert featuring four mother-daughter pairs.13 Gender roles in Indian society must play a part in this imbalance, especially in the way dance is often (thought not always) considered to be a feminine art

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form, and that only girls should study dance and music.\textsuperscript{14}

Furthermore, most Indian immigrant men in the U.S. hold full-time jobs, freeing some Indian immigrant women to work as music teachers. Indian-American men’s employment is often in either the professional or service sectors, and is considered to be the foundation of the family’s financial success. U.S.-based teachers and performers of Indian music and dance are not likely to be highly paid, so that many require the financial support of spouses who hold higher-paying positions.\textsuperscript{15} Certainly there are

\textsuperscript{14} In the section of V. P. Dhanajayan’s book \textit{A Dancer on Dance} (2nd ed., Madras: Bharata Kalanjali, 1991) titled “The Concept of the Male Dancer” (23-24), he attempts to cast off the notions that Indian dance is by, for, and about only women. After a discussion of historic examples of male Indian classical dance, he regrets that so few boys can enter the field today:

With this vast background supporting the existence and virtually the pre-eminence of the male dancer, it is highly regrettable that so many misconceptions continue today. There are some people who hold that dancing should be delicate and graceful, even if a man is the performer. Some teachers go to the extent of coercing their male students to imitate their female counterparts in the departments of dress, ornamentation and presentation.

The cumulative effect of these misconceptions of the public and the misdirection of the teachers is such that very few men are taking to dance, fewer still making the grade to become professionals. This apart, there is immense social and parental pressure on boys to become doctors and engineers so that a lucrative career is assured. With all this psychological stigma, social approbation and economic sanctions, it is not surprising that dance is fast becoming more oriented towards the fair sex. (24)

\textsuperscript{15} In Arthur and Usha Helweg’s \textit{An Immigrant Success Story: East Indians in America} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), there are some accounts of working and non-working women, and of working men’s funding of women’s social activities in the U.S. and return visits to India. See esp. 122-25, and 144.
exceptions to these generalizations, such as the case of the Geeta Munshi & Orchestra, in which a California-based husband and wife form a musical partnership and offer classes and performances of classical, light, ghazal, bhajan, and filmi genres.¹⁶

Visiting Teachers from India

It is not uncommon for members of an Indian-American community to host a visiting music teacher from India. The length of the teacher’s visit may be from only a few days up to several months, for which time the teacher may be housed with a local family involved in arranging the visitor. The classes may have been arranged by either individuals or organizations, such as the Carnatic Music Association of North America’s sponsorship of T. H. Subashchandran. During his three-month appointments as Teacher-in-Residence, “‘Subash Mama’ [uncle] as he has been affectionately and reverently referred to by his students” gave “percussion” lessons in New Jersey during the Summers of 1996-97.17

Visiting teachers give music lessons at places such as a student’s home, the nearby Hindu temple, or a children’s Indian heritage summer camp.18

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18. The Bridgewater, New Jersey, Sri Venkateswara Temple advertises its children’s Hindu summer camp in its newsletter, Viswa Vani (Summer 1997), [4]. An advertisement brochure for the “Hindu Heritage Summer Camp” (Rochester, NY: India Community Center, 1997) exhorts potential campers: “Be proud to be a Hindu American! Understand your Heritage!” (1). In 1997, the camp included Lakshmi Ranganathan of Ontario, Canada, a vina player who visited the camp for a weekend. A North Indian singer taught an entire two-week session of the camp. The camp’s statement of purpose says that:

Hindu Heritage Summer Camp’s purpose is quite simple: to have Hindu-American children experience their Divinity and spirituality, as well as the beautiful religion called Hinduism, and the extraordinary culture of India, land of their ancestors (1).
Visiting music teachers are brought to fill gaps when locally-based teachers are unavailable. While the short-term music study they offer can be criticized as a “crash course” that lacks continuity and depth, for some participants such instruction is preferable to the alternative of not having any music instruction.\textsuperscript{19}

Dancer and singer Hema Murthy works as an engineer in Connecticut, and has studied Western singing and piano, Karnatak vocal music, and Kuchipudi dance, a South Indian form. Her family is from the state Andhra Pradesh and she has lived in Canada and the U.S. Murthy’s dance teacher visited her recently for a week, during which time she had lessons for four hours daily after returning home from her job.\textsuperscript{20} This arrangement is different from most made with visiting teachers, in that Murthy already had a relationship with her teacher, and received individual instruction from the teacher during the lessons—in other cases, many visiting teachers hold group lessons in order to quickly reach more students. In the teacher’s absence, Murthy learns from a video recording of the teacher performing the compositions that she is learning.

Hindu temples in the U.S. often host visiting music teachers. The Pittsburgh Sri Venkateswara Temple regularly conducts Summer music classes in Indian classical vocal and instrumental music. In 1997 the

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\textsuperscript{19} Personal communication, Shakuntala Murthy, 1996. \\
\textsuperscript{20} Personal communication, Hema Murthy, September 30, 1997.
\end{flushleft}
Temple brought teachers of singing, violin, and mridangam from India for a three-month period. All of them were reputable performers with many years of experience teaching, though none were among the most popular of today’s performing artists (who, at other times, may appear at the Temple as part of a North American concert tour). The lineage of the teachers visiting Pittsburgh was included in their brief biographical sketches published by the Temple. Of the vocal music teacher, P. Surya Rao, the temple newsletter sums up his background:

He retired as principal-in-charge of G.V.R. Govt. College of Music and Dance, Vijayawada, AP [Andhra Pradesh state]. Sri Surya Rao achieved considerable command over the theory and practice of classical music under the guidance of his guru Sri M. Lakshmi Narasimha Sastrygaru who was a close disciple of the celebrated Andhra musician and the third in the “parampara” of the disciples of [composer] Sri Thyagaraja “Gayaka Sarvabouma” Parupalli Ramakrishnaiah Pantulugaru.²¹

Surya Rao is a fifth-generation student of Tyagaraja, the important and popular composer of Karnatak music. His students at the temple that Summer were therefore able to receive instruction in Tyagaraja’s compositions from a musician who has a direct, authoritative link to the source of the music. Such a connection is valued in Indian culture, and the Indian-American children who attend his classes thus learn the importance of oral transmission of knowledge.

‘The artists visiting Pittsburgh are highly accomplished people,’ say the biographies in a manner that emphasizes certain Indian cultural values. Specifically, the booklet states that “Sri Surya Rao rose by dint of ‘Sadhana’ to become one of the popular and respected musicians and musicologists of Andhra.”

The term *sadhana* may be translated as a spiritual practice and devotion, and is often another term for Hinduism. The Temple newsletter indicates that this eminent artist is a devout, religious individual; his religious practices and beliefs are regarded as having benefited his music career. Furthermore, the report mentions that the visiting violin teacher, Lalgudi Rajalakshmi, “has students all over the world.” Thus, a new globalization of music instruction is valued along with the older aspect of devotion.

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Shakuntala Murthy: Vocal Music Teacher

Shakuntala Murthy is a South Indian classical vocalist who has resided in the United States since 1992, and in this section I will discuss her music performance and teaching career. I began my study of Karnatak music under her instruction in 1993, with a year of weekly vocal and theory lessons, and monthly music events. Her work is of great importance to a number of people, especially her Indian-American music students in the area of Cleveland, Ohio. There, Murthy has helped to create community events focusing on music, and has trained many individuals in the theory and practice of South Indian music. This section includes information on Murthy’s life in India, her music career in Bangalore, her life and musical

Fig. 5-2. Shakuntala Murthy (vocal) and mridangam-violin accompanists. Kasturi Composers’ Day, Drinko Recital Hall, Cleveland State University. August 6, 1994.

24. Since 1995, Murthy and I have both moved away from the Cleveland area, though I have been able to meet her in her new home in the Philadelphia area occasionally for lessons, interviews, and visits. All quoted passages in this section from an interview (January 22, 1998) and personal communications (1993-98).
community in the U.S., her teaching and musical adaptations in the U.S., and her father’s musicological work. Refer to CD Track 2 to hear her sing “Tatvamariya tarama,” a composition of Papanasam Sivan.

**Murthy’s Life in India**

Shakuntala Murthy was born and raised in Bangalore, a large city in Karnataka state of Southern India that is presently noted as a center of the computer software industry in India. Many Karnatak musicians, both amateurs and professionals, reside there as well. Murthy’s father, S. Rajagopala Iyer, was her principal music teacher. He was a postmaster by profession, and was also an accomplished amateur musicologist and singer. He published *Sangeetha Hridaya Akshara*, a recognized manual on the calculation of improvisatory cadential patterns such as those used in *swara kalapana* [using solfege syllables], *tani avartanam* [percussion solo], and Bharata Natyam dance choreography.25 His system is explained more fully at the end of this chapter section on Murthy.

South Indian art music was always an important part of her childhood home, and her mother and all of her siblings either sang, danced, or played an instrument. Murthy does not remember a time when she did not sing, for she learned music and speech simultaneously. She began to

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take formal lessons with her father at the age of seven, studying compositions in the forms *varnam* and *kriti*. During her high school education she received classroom instruction in music from Balakumari Varadaraja Iyengar, who taught her many compositions. Following school she studied intensively with her father for three years, and then passed with distinction the Vidwan examination.\(^{26}\)

After the marriage and birth of her two daughters Murthy fulfilled her long-standing goal of opening a music school. With her father she formed the Aarathi Music Institution, near her house in Bangalore.\(^{27}\) It opened with an inauguration ceremony attended by family, friends, local musicians, and honored guests, and which included speeches and performances. The school initially enrolled six students, and by the end of the first year this increased to thirty-five. The students, aged five to seventeen, primarily came from the school’s surrounding neighborhood, Jayanagar, a part of Bangalore. There was a mix of boys and girls studying vocal music, and a few boys took lessons on *mridangam* with Shakuntala’s brother Krishnamurthy.

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26. In India, there are governmentally administered music examinations that are offered regularly at several levels of ability. First, one studies for the Junior examination, which tests the students’ abilities to sing a variety of *kriti* compositions. Then one studies for the Senior level, which tests the students’ improvisational skills and knowledge of more compositions. The Vidwan level is the highest level of attainment, and to pass it one must be able to perform *ragam-tanam-pallavi*, a form that can be entirely improvised and is difficult to perform. Personal communication, Shakuntala Murthy, 1998.

27. Murthy’s music academy is named for her elder daughter, a classical dancer and computer programmer who resides in the U.S. as well.
Murthy also developed a career as a stage performer of Karnataka music. She would regularly appear in concerts at temples and sabhas [society; organizations that sponsor music events]. Usually she would appear in a vocal duo with her younger sister Sukanya, and often with their brother Krishnamurthy accompanying on mridangam and another sister, Sundari Ganeshan, on violin. Events on the Hindu religious calendar, such as Ramanavami and Ganesha Chaturthi, are cause for festivals of three to thirty days in duration, usually including music concerts. Composer festivals honoring Tyagaraja, Purandaradasa, and others were also occasions for concerts in which the family would perform. Murthy has also performed frequently on All India Radio, the government network that features programming of classical music.

Community Musical Events in Bangalore, India

During Murthy’s life growing up and then teaching in Bangalore, musical functions served as a means for her family to gather. Because she and her siblings had become scattered around town after marriage, they found they enjoyed regularly getting together and performing music for

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28. Sabha music and dance organizations have been formed in Southern India since near the end of British colonialism (1947). The Madras Music Academy is one of the earliest such organizations founded, and it was soon followed by many others. See The Journal of the Music Academy, Madras (1930–).

one another. Guests and neighbors were also invited to their *bhajan* sessions:

Every Saturday, in [our father’s] house, even when we were children, we had *bhajans* at home. *Bhajans* [were] almost like a concert. Whoever wanted to sing, could sing for an hour on that day. Classical music only, but we used to call it *bhajans*. Every Saturday he used to do that for one or two hours. My father used to sing sometimes, sometimes we used to sing, me and my sister. And sometimes outsiders, whoever from the audience was interested in singing. Every week we would change, some artist would come and sing for that day. Not many people would attend, neighbors and whoever knew we were doing *bhajans*. All the students used to go; my father had six or seven students, adults. . . .

Everybody used to sing, and we would give some *prasad* [food blessed by the deity], distribute it to everybody, and do *mangal arathi* [religious ritual]. Every Saturday we used to do that. Because we were thinking that it was the day we can join and keep in touch with music. Everyday, everybody was busy with other things; when we were all married and went to our own houses, we couldn’t meet. So we made it that Saturday will be the day, and we will all meet at one place and sing together.

At her school in Bangalore, Murthy would produce seasonal musical events that involved all of the students and their families. She followed her father’s example by conducting a Tyagaraja Aradhana, as he had been doing with his students for years.

In my father’s house, with his students, he used to celebrate Tyagaraja Aradhana. . . . So when once I started the music school, I also wanted to do the Tyagaraja festival. Every year I used to perform to Tyagaraja festival. . . .
All the students used to sing, and finally the teacher would sing. We had a good time! . . . Morning, we would have the Pancharatna Kirtanams, after that we used to have food, and then individual singing until evening. In the evening there would be a concert, by the teacher, the teacher’s guru, or someone else.  

Components of this composer-saint festival are common to other musical events Murthy held for her school’s students. Participation in this and other functions aided the students in learning:

I used to [celebrate] the anniversary of the [founding of the] school. Sometimes I used to [conduct] competitions with all the students, to encourage them, so that they will learn, every day practice well, and they will be challenged to sing better than the other students.

Thus while bhajans and festivals for composer-saints have clear religious meaning, the music may also serve as a means of encouraging students to work hard and improve themselves.

Murthy’s music school events in Bangalore served as a means of creating community. These functions would bring together Murthy’s family, the students from various music classes, the families of the

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30. Interview with Shakuntala Murthy, January 22, 1998. Tyagaraja Aradhanas held at any location should include group singing of the Pancharatna Kritis, a set of five compositions of Tyagaraja that are often called his “best-loved” songs (although many of his popular compositions could be termed as such). These five are considered to be very profound and beautiful songs, and were written as a set, to be performed together in a fixed order.

The performance by a large group, ranging in size from several singers to hundreds with many accompanying instrumentalists, is unique in Karnatak music, which is otherwise primarily chamber music for a soloist and accompanists. According to personal communication with Vijayasree Mokkapati (1997-98), the songs’ group performance is facilitated in part through a simplification of gamaka expressions and correspondingly quickened tempi.
students, and neighbors and friends. Through music and musical
functions, families were reunited, students listened to their teacher and
other experienced musicians perform, and musicians had the motivation
of public performance to encourage them to be disciplined about practicing
for their lessons.


d\textit{Murthy's Life in the United States}

In cultural events created by South Indians in the U.S., many of the
above themes are clearly discernible. The social, religious, and musical
aspects of Indian-American events are often borrowed directly from
Indian antecedents. In Murthy’s case, she and her students in Cleveland
would follow the practice of Bangalore functions, with family
involvement, group and individual singing, the teacher’s performance,
and socializing with food. Indian events serve as models for music
festivals in the U.S., with a transference of many of the activities,
compositions, and motivations. However, some aspects of festivals
performed in India have not been transferred to American versions of the
same event, such as a street procession during a Tyagaraja Aradhana for
alms collection. Now I will examine Shakuntala Murthy’s musical experiences in the U.S., to illustrate ways in which her work here draws on Indian models.

Murthy came to the United States in 1992 with her husband Srinivas and second daughter Chitra, settling in Cleveland, Ohio, near her brother-in-law’s family. Initially she was “not very much interested in coming because [of] losing the musical atmosphere. In India I was very much involved in music.” But her daughter was excited by the prospects of higher education in the U.S., so they came to Cleveland.

31. Murthy described in detail unchavriti [alms collection procession to a temple], an aspect of the Tyagaraja Aradhana performed at the site of Tyagaraja’s samadhi [cremation] in Tiruvaiyaru, Tamil Nadu. She participated in recreations of this act in Bangalore. However, the procession of begging is not usually performed in North American festivals, in my experience. From an interview with Shakuntala Murthy, January 22, 1998:

In the morning we would go to the temple, like a procession, singing all the divayanamavali and utsava sampradaya kirtanas [types of Tyagaraja’s compositions], keeping [holding up] the Tyagaraja [image]. The mridangist tied the mridangam to his neck. And the kanjira would be playing, and the violin will be keeping it like the Western [position] in his hand. We used to do that in Bangalore, in Vasanthgudi [neighborhood]. We had a Karachianjanaya [Hanuman, Rama’s disciple] Temple. . . . We used to go there, we had a place to sit and sing . . . for some time, then come back [to the school].

While going on the road, we used to sing . . . all these things. And some two or three houses used to arrange for the puja [religious service] in between. They’d put the rice and other things, like in Tyagaraja’s days they used to do. We’d . . . take that rice. One person will put the disguise as Tyagaraja, keeping a tambura [drone] and going along with us. At . . . that house, those people will come and stand in front [of the house]. The Tyagaraja . . . will come and [take] the rice. They prostrate before him, they give the rice, fruits, and other things. After coming to the temple, this rice they will put in with the other rice that we are going to cook, . . . mix it. They cook for everybody like prasad [offered to God, then eaten].
Murthy was pleased and surprised by the music scene that developed around her teaching in Cleveland: “I had a very good time in Cleveland, [with] lots of music students; I was overwhelmed!” (by their enthusiasm). By the time I met her and began to study Karnatak vocal music, in August, 1993, she had about thirty to thirty-five students, and led musical gatherings and celebrations occurred at least once a month. This musical community developed out of the participants’ needs for music studies and social gatherings.

When she first came to Cleveland, Murthy, who had been employed in Bangalore by the Central Government’s Provident Fund [for retirement], took up a medical secretary course and then found employment at a doctor’s office. Soon she came to know of Kasturi Kannada Association, a religious and social organization based in Cleveland that consisted of people from her state in India, Karnataka. Murthy attended this group’s Ganesha Festival in September, 1992, not knowing any of the members.32 She “just wanted to go and sing for Ganesha,” and performed the kriti “Mahaganapathim,” in Natta raga by Mutthuswamy Dikshitar.

32. Kasturi Kannada Association is also discussed in Chapter Three, regarding their Deepavali celebrations. At their Ganesha Festival, Chaya Swamy recognized Murthy as a childhood acquaintance. Swamy subsequently became one of Murthy’s first music students in America, and has gone on to release recordings of devotional music that are discussed in Chapter Seven.
Murthy’s Musical Community in the United States

That night at the Ganesha festival many people complimented Murthy and several requested music lessons beginning immediately. Utilizing the facilities of the Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Hindu Temple as a teaching space, on November 1, 1992, Murthy began to teach a few people, including Chaya Swamy, Vinutha, and Gita Sampitkumar and her daughter. Soon, the number of students increased to over twenty and it was decided to move the lessons to the homes of the students, many of whom lived in the nearby suburb Westlake. Murthy taught all day Saturday and Sunday, giving each student an individual one-hour lesson.

One factor that motivated her students was the opportunity to perform a composition of composer-saint Tyagaraja at the local Aradhana in his honor. By the mid-1990s, this festival had grown to a considerable size and fame, so for Indian-Americans in Cleveland it is considered to be both their own local festival (as found in many South Indian-American communities) and a much larger event with an international scope. Many of Murthy’s students, both adults and children, previously had little formal musical training and needed to start from the beginning, learning to sing the basic solfege exercises swaravali varisa. Nonetheless they aspired to give their musical offerings at the April festival, just a few months away.
Murthy decided to teach some students simpler songs from a portion of Tyagaraja’s repertoire known as divyanamavali, compositions with God’s names as the text and a simpler structure than the kriti form. Others who had more experience learned more difficult pieces, and children were put together into small groups to boost their confidence. Most of her students were able to perform individually or in groups at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana of April, 1993, and in subsequent years.

By the Spring of 1993, Murthy was recognized as one of the leading authorities of Karnatak music residing in the Cleveland area. At the opening of the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana, she joined the professional musicians from India and the local people trained by Ramnad Raghavan in singing the Pancharatna Kritis.33 Only musicians with a minimum of several years of serious study are able to perform this series of compositions, as they are not taught to beginning students; and the musicians must be competent in performing these lengthy songs of moderate difficulty before joining the group singing.

33. The Cleveland Tyagaraja festival and Raghavan’s contributions to it are discussed in Chapter Three.
Murthy continued to acquire more students during her first year in Cleveland, teaching some at a music room in her apartment home in Bedford, a Cleveland suburb, while continuing to spend weekends teaching in students’ homes in Westlake. When I inquired in Oberlin about finding a music teacher, I was soon introduced to Murthy by R. Balasubramaniam, an organizer of the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana. I met her just before the Kasturi Kannada Association’s Composers’ Day of August, 1993, at which she was honored with an award given “with love, affection and sincere appreciation of her enthusiasm and talent in
bringing together people of all ages through the medium of divine Carnatic music.”

Students of Shakuntala Murthy gathered about once a month to perform for one another the compositions they were learning. These events were held on Saturday afternoons in student’s homes around the Cleveland area. Students and their entire families attended, as well as friends and relatives. Many of her students were adult women, with some employed in professional fields such as medicine; all were either first- or second-generation South Indians who resided in the Cleveland area. There were variations among them in musical training and experience: some had Karnatak music studies in India, some had sung only devotional or film music, and others had little background other than hearing the music occasionally.

In a typical musical gathering, the students would go in turn and each sing one composition. First children and then adults sang, and Murthy would conclude the afternoon with a short performance of up to an hour. Some of these events had a larger purpose, such as the celebration of a puja to honor one of the deities, or the annual Vijayadasami day on which we honored our guru, Murthy, with respect and gifts. Other events took place just before public performances, and were intended to build our

34. Inscription from a plaque presented to Shakuntala Murthy by the Kasturi Kannada Association, Cleveland, Ohio, on August 21, 1993.
confidence at public singing and ensure that we were adequately prepared.

Murthy said of these functions:

Some of [the students] had stage fear, so to overcome that stage fear I used to have every month one function in some student’s house. Everybody used to participate. . . . It was really nice! . . . They used to sing nicely and all the kids would participate. . . . It’s a social function, to get to know each other, and to see how the others are singing. Because they used to come individually for the classes. So in that function they used to see how . . . others are singing, and how also they should sing. They used to learn more from listening to the others. . . . And the teacher finally [at the end of the event].

The events gave students an opportunity to hear Karnatak music in performance, something that is not widely available in the U.S. When Murthy was about to begin, those who had moved out of the room to talk came back, and children were quieted so that all could focus on her music. After her performance, a pot-luck South Indian vegetarian dinner was served and then the event was concluded.

Fig. 5-4. Shakuntala Murthy (vocal) and Ramarao (violin). Kasturi Composers’ Day, Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple, July 15, 1995.
Shakuntala Murthy was honored at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana in April, 1995, for her contributions in teaching Karnatak music in the United States. The festival organizing committee recognized “her hard work and services as a music teacher and knowledgeable resource. In a short period, she has impressed our community with her effectiveness, approach and affection.” Murthy moved away from Cleveland in August, 1995, to live near Philadelphia with her elder daughter, a computer programmer. The social and music networks she developed in Cleveland have not been formed to such an extent in her new home, mostly due to the much smaller density of South Indians in her area. However, she now lives in the same home as her son-in-law, percussionist and computer programmer Muralikrishna, and the two practice music together daily. Murthy has also maintained connections with her students in Ohio and has been invited back on several occasions to teach and perform, such as for the March, 1998, Kasturi Composers’ Day festival.

**Murthy’s Adaptations in America**

Murthy has given concerts in various locations in the Unites States, and regarding these performances she explained adaptations necessary due to

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35. Inscription from a plaque awarded to Shakuntala Murthy by the Tyagaraja Aradhana Committee, Cleveland, Ohio, April 15, 1995. She was honored in a public ceremony and presented with a silk shawl and award plaque.
the problems facing a Karnataka musician outside of India. She noted that, in some areas of the U.S., one must assertively promote oneself in order to arrange concerts.\textsuperscript{36} Once a performance is arranged, the availability of musicians and instruments can present problems. In the U.S., there are very few adequate \textit{mridangam} and violin accompanists, whereas in India there are many such musicians available and all concerts will have a full component of players. In America, a soloist may of necessity occasionally give a concert without a violin. Additionally, the \textit{tambura} [four-string plucked drone] is fragile and thus difficult to transport to the U.S., so that few instruments are available; when present, there may be no one available who can competently play it.\textsuperscript{37} Murthy’s son-in-law Muralikrishna performs on the \textit{mridangam}, so she usually has at least that instrument available to accompany her singing. However in some concerts without him she had problems with the drummer not having a

\textsuperscript{36} Her difficulty in securing performances recalls a notice in the Pittsburgh Sri Venkateswara Hindu Temple publication \textit{Saptagiri Vani} 28 (December, 1997): 26, which states: “We constantly get requests from talented artists from Pittsburgh and outside to perform in the Temple. In the past we have not been able to accommodate all the requests.” A committee had been formed with the charge of reviewing applications for performances in the temple’s auditorium.

\textsuperscript{37} The \textit{tambura} is not often used in America. However, today even in India the \textit{tambura} is frequently absent from a concert of Karnatak music. An electronic drone instrument called a \textit{sruti box}, developed as a practice aid, is almost always used in performances both in and out of India. It has largely supplanted the \textit{tambura} due to its convenience, portability, stability of tuning, and resultant lessening of demands placed on the travel and performance of the artists.
drum of exactly the correct pitch, which would not arise in India due to availability of adequate instruments.

Fig. 5-5. Shakuntala Murthy (vocal) and Muralikrishna (mridangam). Kasturi Composers’ Day, Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple. July 15, 1995.

Murthy has made some adaptations in her teaching methodology to accommodate the distance of her students. When she travels to Ohio she stays for a week or two and holds music classes with her students—now she is occasionally a ‘visiting teacher’ there. Before a student’s performance, Murthy may coach her over the telephone, listening to the singing and correcting it when necessary. Murthy makes use of audio cassette technology and written notation with her students. She had done this before, and both are used by many other teachers in the U.S. and India, but the cassettes and notations take on a different role when the teacher is not present for weekly lessons. Before leaving Cleveland she prepared six
90-minute cassette recordings of herself singing items from the Karnatak repertoire that she wanted her students to know. The following eleven composition represent only about one tenth of all the pieces Murthy recorded on these tapes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title [first line]</th>
<th>Raga</th>
<th>Tala</th>
<th>Composer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunjanajeevana</td>
<td>Khamas</td>
<td>Rupakam</td>
<td>Tyagaraja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaya Jaya Jaya</td>
<td>Natta</td>
<td>Khanda Capu</td>
<td>Purandaradasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odi Baraya</td>
<td>Bhairavi</td>
<td>Adi</td>
<td>Purandaradasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakala Gihabala</td>
<td>Atana</td>
<td>Khanda Capu</td>
<td>Purandaradasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teliserama</td>
<td>Purnachandrika</td>
<td>Adi</td>
<td>Tyagaraja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seetama Mayama</td>
<td>Vasantha</td>
<td>Rupakam</td>
<td>Tyagaraja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulasidala</td>
<td>Mayamalavagaula</td>
<td>Rupakam</td>
<td>Tyagaraja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramanama</td>
<td>Anandabhairavi</td>
<td>Rupakam</td>
<td>Purandaradasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalemelara</td>
<td>Margahindolam</td>
<td>Adi</td>
<td>Tyagaraja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vadera Daivamu</td>
<td>Pantuvarali</td>
<td>Adi</td>
<td>Tyagaraja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Narada</td>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>Rupakam</td>
<td>Tyagaraja</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These tapes were copied and distributed to students. They are intended to be used in conjunction with a lesson, and allow the student to hear a song repeatedly even after the teacher has departed.

When a particular student is learning a piece, Murthy will also give a hand-written notation. Like many teachers she utilizes published notations only for certain items such as basic solfege pattern exercises. For

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most compositions she will write a notation by hand, in either Kannada or Roman script. This is often done for each student at the time of the lesson, though some students will write their own notations in a notebook. An example of her notation for the composition “Sogasujuda” by Tyagaraja:

Fig. 5-7. Shakuntala Murthy’s notation for the Tyagaraja kriti “Sogasujuda.” 1993.

Murthy’s notations usually begin with the name of the raga and its arohana and avarohana [ascending and descending abstracted scale], the tala, and the composer. For the song she writes the swaras in sargam notation [the notes with abbreviated Indian solfege syllables “srgmpdns”]
with the *sahitya* [text] below. These elements are written in a standard left-to-right order, with one or two time cycles per line. Sections of the *kriti* form, such as *pallavi* and *caranam*, are indicated as well. In some cases she does not write the *swaras*, such as when the melody is repetitive or the student has grasped it at the time of the lesson. After I learned these elements from Murthy, we would always discuss the meaning of the song texts.

### The Tala Calculation System of Murthy's Father

There are many idiosyncratic systems for generating improvisations such as *swara kalpana*, *tani avartanam*, and dance step patterns, but little has been published that is clear and accessible for the student. Shakuntala Murthy’s father wrote and published *Sangeetha Akshara Hridaya*, a comprehensive and clear system of formulas for performing these improvisations. His system is important and unique, for it is easily available in a book form, mathematically grounded, clearly presented, and readily applicable to musical performance. Murthy taught his system to

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many people, through workshops and lessons, in both India and the United States.

Born in 1903 at Tiruvasanalur village of Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu, S. Rajagopala was named for the deity of the temple where his mother prayed for a son. He lived with his aunt’s family after his parents died when he was five years of age. In his teens he studied Karnatak singing under Sri P. D. Krishnaswamy Iyer at Tiruchirapalli, and when seventeen married Lalithamma from his guru’s village Pandamangalam.

Rajagopala was talented enough to have considered a career as a performing musician but rather went into government service. He began in the Postal Service as a telegraph operator, and soon received a promotion after impressing a senior postmaster by singing at an employee competition. His wife had eleven children, eight of whom are presently living. Eventually promoted to postmaster, Rajagopala worked most of his career in Karnataka state, northwest of Tamil Nadu. Although he worked long days, he spent his evenings and early mornings practicing music, as well as teaching students at home, as noted above. He often performed at functions and competitions, and composed varnams in English, Tamil, and Sanskrit languages.

40. The sketch of Rajagopala’s life and work is constructed from interviews I conducted with his daughter Smt. Shakuntala Murthy in 1996. In Bangalore and Madras, India, I met three of his children as well as several grandchildren and great-grandchildren; several of them discussed or demonstrated the system for me.
Rajagopala’s theoretical system, neatly presented in his text, is actually the result of many decades of focused thought, reflection, experimentation, and application. As a postal worker,

The fact that he did not need to practice music for a livelihood . . . released him from the limited vision of the professional musician and . . . enabled him to teach, perform and propagate, independently of personal gain.  

He would occasionally telephone home when a musical idea came “like a flash in his mind,” have a child jot it down, and then work it out when he returned in the evening. The children, including Shakuntala Murthy, were also frequently called upon to test his ideas through singing and playing mridangam.

Many manuscripts were generated over the years, but not until near the end of his life did a complete publication materialize. In the 1980s, as Rajagopala became elderly, friends encouraged him to publish his life’s work and ideas. Selecting texts for a monograph from the cases of manuscript paper was a “very, very, very difficult job” according to his daughter Shakuntala; the family would gather and painstakingly discuss the content and sequence of chapters. Later they formed an association, Gaanarasika Mandali, to publish a book. After carefully proof-reading each page, about one thousand copies were printed in 1988. Most were sold,

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both to individuals and libraries; currently a German language translation is planned.

Fig. 5-8. Cover of S. Rajagopala Iyer's *Sangeetha Akshara Hridaya*. 1988.

At the release function for Rajagopala’s book his children demonstrated the concepts. They have continued to present their father’s work: at the Madras Music Academy annual conference, through workshops organized by Gaanarasika Mandali throughout South India; and in their own performances and teaching in India and the U.S. Although he passed away in 1989, Rajagopala’s system survives him, through text, family, and music.
The following introduction to Rajagopala’s system is derived from my Karnatak music studies with Shakuntala Murthy in which I was instructed in the fundamentals of the system; the text *Sangeetha Akshara Hridaya* has also served as a source of information. Rajagopala’s new approach concerns the calculations a performer makes when improvising a passage, ending on either *samam* [the first beat of a time cycle] or *edipu* [the starting place of the melody within a cycle]. *Tala* is the cycle of *aksharas* [beats, pulses] over time, and is indicated by *kriya* [counting with fingers and hands]. The hand movements for *Adi tala*, the most common cycle, are shown here on the first line, labeled *kriya*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kriya</th>
<th>clap</th>
<th>pinky</th>
<th>ring</th>
<th>middle</th>
<th>clap</th>
<th>wave</th>
<th>clap</th>
<th>wave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5-9. *Adi tala*, Rajagopala *tala* calculation system.

In Karnatak music a musician generally thinks of the *aksharas* as being numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. (indicated in fig 5-9 on the line “Number”). In the Rajagopala system, one simply reverses the order of numbering to give the “Place” (shown in fig. 5-9), which becomes the basis of all calculations.

The *kala* [speed] can be thought of as the density of notes occurring during a steady pulse. For example, either one, two, or four notes can be performed within a single *akshara*. Thus in first *kala* you get one note per *akshara*, two notes in second *kala*, and four in third. In applying this system, such notes could be solfege *swaras* “sa ri ga ma pa da ni sa,”
percussive thatthakaras such as “takadimi,” or dance steps. Thatthakaras are useful for demonstrating the system; in the figure below, each numbered group is called a jathi, progressively consisting of additional notes:

1  Ta  
2  Ta Ka  
3  Ta Ki Ta  
4  Ta Ka Di Na  
5  Ta Din Gi Na Tom  
6  Ta Ka Ta Ka Di Na  
7  Ta Ki Ta Ka Di Na

Fig. 5-10. Selected thatthakara jathis, Rajagopala tala calculation system.

As one combines these elements of jathi and place the essence of the Rajagopala system emerges. He clearly states a basic rule for arriving at the goal of samam [the first pulse of a cycle]: “a Jathi from its place can be given once in I speed, twice in II speed and four times in III speed.”

42 Note how this works for creating phrases in Adi tala:

3rd Jathi from 3rd Place:  
Place  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  samam  
1st speed  Ta  ki  ta  Ta  
2nd speed  Taki  ta  Taki  ta  Ta  
3rd speed  TktTktTktTktT

5th Jathi from 5th Place:  
Place  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  samam  
1st speed  Ta  din  gi  na  tom  Ta  
2nd speed  Ta  di  gi  na  to  Ta  di  gi  na  to  Ta  
3rd speed  TdgntTdghtTdghtTdght

Fig. 5-11. Jathi from Place, Rajagopala tala calculation system.

This fundamental concept can be altered to create a great variety of combinations. A karvai [silence] can be inserted at any point provided the time occupied by this “pass” is reduced from that of the jathis. Thus a phrase could become both notes and rests, rather than a continuous series of notes. For example, starting from 4th place in 3rd kala,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>samam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Var. 1</td>
<td>T,</td>
<td>k,</td>
<td>d,</td>
<td>n,</td>
<td>T k d n T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 2</td>
<td>T k d n</td>
<td>T,</td>
<td>k,</td>
<td>d,</td>
<td>n,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5-12. Insertion of karvai, Rajagopala tala calculation system. Karvai is notated as “,”. “T k d n” = “Ta di na”. Two variations are shown.

The aksharas [beats, pulses] can be split for further elaboration. Several different jathis [groups of notes] can be combined when their sum equals the place. For example, the 5th place can be thought of as a combination of the 2nd and 3rd places. Thus, in 3rd kala [speed] one can give the total place jathi of 5 once and the constituent jathis of 2 and 3 thrice each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>samam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd speed</td>
<td>Tk jn tTkTkTkTkTkTkTkT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituent jathis</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5-13. Splitting of Aksharas, Rajagopala tala calculation system. Numbers indicate jathi length. “T k j n t” = “Ta ju nu ta”. “T k” = “Ta ka”.

Thus each place has many variations. Rajagopala expanded his system to account for edipu [starting point in the cycle of the melody], and to allow for patterns that extend over multiple tala cycles. Furthermore he
gives instructions for applying the system to all of the common *talas* used in Karnataka music.

Rajagopala hoped to impart his system to all interested musicians:

I am firmly convinced that the results of my research must be openly disseminated among all the musicians so that these [ideas] do not become the private monopoly of a few individual disciples. The aim in publishing this book therefore is to expose to all freely the secret of singing swaras and combining Jathis in neat order.43

His daughter Shakuntala Murthy has taught aspects of this systems to her students in America, thus introducing to them complex musicological issues and performance practices, and fulfilling her father’s wishes.

**Conclusions**

Shakuntala Murthy’s activities as a music performer and teacher were essential to creating a vital Karnatak music scene for many people. Her thirty-five students in the U.S. look to her as a music *guru*, and value her as a source of knowledge on music and a link to their cultural heritage. The events that were held in people’s homes and other sites resembles events in India, regarding aspects of the event such as: gathering together in a context of being dispersed during most of the week; participating with group and individual singing of classical compositions; listening to the

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Kala Prasad’s Studies and Teaching

Kala Prasad is a long-time resident of Glastonbury, Connecticut. She was born in Kerala state in southern India, and was raised in Madras. She lived in Mylapore, an older area of Madras known for its many musicians, music teachers, and music societies. As a child she studied Karnatak singing and vina, under a teacher came to her house three times weekly after school to teach Prasad and her six sisters. She learned many compositions that she remembers and sings today, though she was not at that time as enthusiastic for music as she is at present: “It was one of the things you do, you go to school, come back and learn music, it was a part of your life. . . . Only when it is not there, you realize its worth.” During her enrollment as a university student at Stella Maris College in Madras, Prasad had private lessons in North Indian music and learned to sing light-classical Hindustani and devotional music.

44. At one full-day students’ musical event in a private home, after eating food I was given a paan to chew. This is an Indian after-dinner digestive that includes betel nut and leaf, spices, and sweeteners or tobacco. Several people present there would not normally have taken a paan in India but had one that night, because, they told me, it reminded them of India, and for its novelty here in the U.S.

Soon after graduation, Kala Prasad married and in 1977 settled with her husband in Brooklyn, New York, and then Chicago, Illinois. She found that immigration was not stressful for her, as she was ready to accept change in her life. Within a couple of years they moved to Connecticut, where they remain today. Prasad recalls that music and Indian community activities were not initially prominent in her life in the U.S., for she was busy raising two children, and her new friends, especially North Indians and Americans, were not particularly interested in South Indian music. She eventually began attending Hindu religious holiday functions in West Hartford, sponsored by the same people who later built the Sri Satyanarayana Temple in Middletown, Connecticut. Depending on the occasion, such as Navaratri, Deepavali, or Ganesha Chaturthi, at many of these events she either sang a Mira bhajan [devotional song], a Tyagaraja kriti, or performed on the vina.

**Prasad’s Studies of Karnatak Music**

Prasad began to teach music in the mid-1980s, when those who heard her performances at religious functions requested her to instruct their daughters in singing. She was asked because of her beautiful voice quality

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46. Before their temple was built and a priest’s services acquired, the Connecticut Hindu group relied on members to conduct rituals and services, as many newly founded Hindu groups have done in the U.S. One such member who conducted services was A. V. Srinivasan, presently an officer of the temple, a supporter of artistic and cultural events there, and an elected official of his town’s government.
and skill in singing difficult music. She agreed to teach, yet was hesitant and decided it best to further her own studies while tutoring others: “Then I realized that I needed a teacher before I can continue teaching.” In 1987, Prasad began to study with her first teacher since college, Ramnad Raghavan of Wesleyan University. He began by teaching Tyagaraja’s Pancharatna Kritis, which Prasad wanted to know better in order to participate in the local Tyagaraja Aradhana for which she had been invited to sing.47

Prasad began to study Karnatak singing under T. Viswanathan, after several years with Raghavan and with his blessings and encouragement. Viswanathan taught her a few compositions initially, including Dikshitar’s “Saraswati Manohari” and Tyagaraja’s “Anuragamuleni,” but then he decided that she would benefit from a return to the pedagogical beginnings of the music and should thoroughly study basic exercises such as swaravali, janta swaram, and alankaras. It is not uncommon for a teacher to require even experienced students to begin with these foundations, in order to ensure to the teacher’s satisfaction that the student has adequate voice control. Furthermore, Prasad had decided that she wished to be able to progress to a higher level of musicianship, and

47. The Connecticut Tyagaraja Aradhana was initiated by Usha Kanithi of Cheshire, Connecticut. It was held a few times at Cheshire High School until it was moved to the Sri Satyanarayana Temple after it was built. It is an annual event there, held in late April or early May, usually attended by several hundred people.
daily practice of such exercises is an essential foundation to performance of
difficult compositions and improvisations. It was new for her to use a
metronome and tuning meter, devices not widely used in India but which
Viswanathan utilizes, and she found that her sense of sruti [intonation]
and laya [rhythm] improved significantly under his guidance.

Prasad had been brought up in Madras and studied music as a child, but
in the U.S. she is studying under Viswanathan, a teacher long accustomed
to instructing Americans with little background in Karnatak music. His
methods have been successful in imparting musical knowledge to her as
well. In my interview with Prasad, we discussed perception of different
ragas and production of gamakas [shapes or ornaments to notes]:

Kala: Before [studies with Viswanathan] I was always using
gamakas, but I think it was just an absorption from childhood,
you’ve just been hearing it and have just done it. . . . Whereas
when I came to Viswanathan, he has notation for all the songs,
and there’s interpretation of the notation. If I look at my old
books when I learned music back home, just the kriti [text] would
be written, that’s all. There’s no notation for the kriti. Three
times a week the teacher would come, over and over and over
again, it just sinks into you.

Joseph: It is a different way of learning.

Kala: So all these gamakas, you don’t realize what you’re doing to
the swaram [note], you’re not aware of all that. After being with
Viswanathan, you understand the whole technique of how you
can sing the same “ni” in various ways. Now I can hear it, if I sit
in a concert when someone is doing raga alapana, as they are
singing the raga alapana, I am hearing the swarams [‘sa ri ga ma
pa da ni sa’] in my head. . . . That has come from Viswanathan.48

I too have notebooks from music studies in India that include only the *sahitya* [text], without notation of *swara* [pitch] or *gamaka* [ornament or shape]. The frequent contact one can have with a teacher in India is not the sole factor in the difference; Viswanathan’s musical style is distinctive and he believes it important to deliberately transmit this element of music making to his students, in part through notation.

Few of today’s Karnatak music students, whether in India or elsewhere, are able to have intensive, prolonged, and long-term contact with their music teacher, unless they are learning from someone in their house, such as a parent or relative. Audio recording is one means of recreating a context of musical immersion in the *guru*’s style and sound. Prasad makes effective use of recording technology in her music studies. She tapes each lesson with Viswanathan and later at home edits to another tape the passages in which she has sung to the teacher’s satisfaction. Thus she will create a tape of herself correctly singing each phrase of a composition in order. She also records Viswanathan’s singing, and listens to both tapes in the days between lessons. While in India today it is becoming more common for musicians to learn compositions from commercial recordings by a variety of artists, Prasad’s use of tapes is somewhat different in that she listens at home to her own teacher, and makes a conscious effort to learn small details of expression as well as the general sense of a composition.
One of Prasad’s goals is to “be able to sing any improvisation, alapana, swara kalpana, or niraval, for any composition” she knows. To achieve this, she transcribes and analyzes recordings of music as well. Using commercial and lesson recordings, she notates swaras from improvisatory passages such as alapana and swara kalpana. Then she practices singing along with the recordings. Comparison of artists, and different recordings of the same raga have revealed to her the common elements that performers utilize.

Another effective learning technique that Prasad employs is to practice at home immediately after a lesson, when the music is fresh in her mind. Given a weekly lesson schedule, after a day or two she may stop practicing a newly taught composition in order to avoid learning mistakes; she waits for the next lesson when Viswanathan “fine tunes” her singing. Thus she has progressed considerably under his guidance. She loves the music:

But then when I start singing I forget about all that, it doesn’t bother me, I’m just totally in a different world. That’s why I say it’s very therapeutic for me, I need it!

Nonetheless she feels at times that she “isn’t ready to graduate”—a sentiment I share, given that the more one learns of Karnatak music the more obvious it becomes just how much more there is to learn, a humbling concept not always readily grasped by the beginning student.

Indeed, she is motivated by her teacher’s knowledge and her awareness of what is possible to yet learn. The result of her efforts is that she is able to
give a concert of Karnatak music, as she has done recently at the Middletown Sri Satyanarayana Temple and elsewhere.

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**Fig. 5-14. Concert program for Kala Prasad’s performance at the Old State House, Hartford, Connecticut. Includes an image of Saraswati, the Goddess of learning and music. February 4, 1998.**

*Fig. 5-14. Concert program for Kala Prasad’s performance at the Old State House, Hartford, Connecticut. Includes an image of Saraswati, the Goddess of learning and music. February 4, 1998.*

**Prasad’s Teaching**

Prasad presently teaches about ten students, mostly younger girls of elementary to high school age. She conducts classes at her home in
Connecticut, teaching Saturday mornings and some weeknights to accommodate school and work schedules of her students. She explained that in her childhood in Madras many girls were sent to music lessons, often against their will, in the hopes of cultivating desirable feminine qualities. Boys were never forced to study music, and therefore any boy who took an interest had an easier chance of doing well, since they were more self-motivated than girls. Shakuntala Murthy noted this gender-based split in expectations as well, and both teachers thought this pattern was changing as gender roles are questioned in contemporary India.

Explanations other than marriageability for why children are sent to music lessons may be important for Indian families in the contemporary U.S. Prasad noted that music was an opportunity for second-generation Indian-American children to learn about their parent’s language. Singing is an enjoyable means of learning to pronounce the sounds of languages such as Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada. Thus cultural maintenance is present as a motivation for the families of students.

Prasad’s students perform at her Tyagaraja Aradhana, which she began to hold at her home in the late 1980s. She views this annual event as a motivation for her students to carefully prepare compositions she has taught, and as an opportunity for them to sing publicly for friends and families. She conducts her event according to the model of the festival at Tiruvaliyaru, the samadhi [cremation site] of the saint-composer: first a
group sings the Pancharatnas, then individuals each sing one composition by Tyagaraja. Naturally it is also a social event, with friends, students and their families, and her teachers Raghavan and Viswanathan present. A delicious home-cooked pot-luck Indian meal concludes the day.

Fig. 5-15. Tyagaraja Aradhana at the home of Kala Prasad. Prasad at upper left, with several of her students preparing to sing. Glastonbury, Connecticut. January 18, 1998.

Prasad has taught music to her daughter Anusha as well. As in musical families residing in India, Prasad’s instruction to her is rarely given as a formal lesson. Instead her teaching consists of frequent, informal singing in the course of daily life. Beginning when her daughter was around six years old, Prasad taught her exercises and compositions. Anusha would rarely practice alone, but rather with her mother/teacher sitting with her to correct any mistakes. Prasad stated that this was “like I learned in India,”
by practicing in the presence of the *guru*. Her daughter has been to India many times and always sings for her relatives there.

![Image of Kala Prasad performing](image)

> Fig. 5-16. Kala Prasad performs at the Wesleyan Indian music students’ concert. Crowell Concert Hall, Wesleyan University. May 1, 1997.

**Conclusions**

In this chapter I have discussed several aspects of the teaching of Karnataka music in the United States. The primary focus has been on those teachers who are Indian and who teach primarily within Indian-American communities. Their act of teaching this music is an essential component of Karnataka music anywhere, in that it is a system that must be transmitted through teacher-student relationships.

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49. Harriotte Hurie related a similar account of this learning method, of “practicing” in her Hindustani music teacher’s presence, in Varanasi, India. Interview with Harriotte Hurie, March 19, 1998. She is profiled in the following chapter.
The relationship between teacher and student in America is special for many reasons: it is a significant source of information about Indian culture; it is the basis for a social network that gives rise to community musical “get-togethers;” it is an interaction that is personal and intimate; and it is the source of understanding, achievement, and personal, spiritual, and musical satisfaction.

As has been shown, Karnatak music teaching is adapted to social conditions in the U.S. Teachers educate children who may be unfamiliar with the languages they must sing. Accommodations are made for lifestyle and scheduling. Recording technology and notations are employed, to make up for limited contact with the teacher. Other aspects of teaching are borrowed more substantially from India, such as the holding of music festivals, and the repertoire of compositions that are taught. But American adaptations may be found here as well, such as having a festival in a private home in a suburban setting.

The teaching and learning of South Indian Karnatak music in the United States thus serves a variety of purposes for its participants. Indian culture can be continued and re-created in the U.S., through festivals and musical gatherings lead by the teacher; and aspects of Indian culture are transmitted to an Indian diaspora in America, by means of the teacher’s presence, teaching of lessons, and serving as a role models for students.
The previous four chapters of this thesis have taken as their main focus selected cases from the United States of Karnatak music (and a few cases of Bharata Natyam dance) as it is performed, taught, and supported by people who are first-generation immigrants from the Southern states of India. However, they are not the only ones who listen to, learn, and enjoy South Indian classical music and dance forms. In this chapter I examine the artistic activities of other groups involved in South Indian music and dance in the U.S.: the children of immigrants, or the second generation; and non-Indian-Americans.\textsuperscript{1} Although elsewhere in this thesis I have

\textsuperscript{1} Regarding those Indians who came to the U.S. after the reform of immigration laws in 1965, a \textit{third} generation of Indian-Americans has not yet made its presence fully known. Some have been born, but their present young age makes their force as a group minimal. At some future time, the lives and music of the third generation would certainly be of great interest.
mentioned instances of interaction and collaboration between members of these two groups and first-generation immigrants, a more direct look at non-immigrants’ involvement in music can nevertheless provide very different perspectives that help to illuminate the significance of South Indian performing arts to people in the United States.

Cultural identity is a topic rich in complexity. Many people in the United States possess multiple definitions of their individual and group identities, affinities, and allegiances. Particularly, many immigrants residing in the United States confront the need to synthesize elements of “American” and “ethnic” identities into a new sense of self. My use of

2. In Chapter Three, I mention the relationship of second-generation Indian-Americans and organizations such as Kasturi: Kannada Association, and the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana festival. In Chapter Four, I discuss Hindu temple youth groups. And in Chapter Five, I discuss Karnatak music teachers’ teaching of immigrants’ children.


... We Indian women in America
wear saris and salwaar kameezes, yes,
we have kept our culture well. On
Navaratri nights we put on chania cholis and dance the Garba. In Gurdwaras
we veil our heads with shimmery dupattas. But see
us also jogging the morning pavement
in Memorial Park in sweatpants, our fluorescent
Nike shoes. In our jeans at the Safeway
checkout. In streamlined suits
and silkpearl blouses, our heels clicking
as we enter conference rooms....

And what we want is this: for us and our daughters,
India and America,
the best of both together....
terms such as “immigrant,” “second-generation,” and “non-Indian” is a means of introducing the people who are active in South Indian music in the U.S.; it is not an effort to inscribe fixed labels or categories to any individuals and groups. I have found that each person I consider has an identity that is changing, self-defined, subject to outside forces, and impossible to easily define. For them, Karnatak music is important in the forging and negotiation of their sense of who they are.

To explore the musical lives of those non-immigrants involved with South Indian music in the U.S., this chapter focuses on the lives and musical careers of several particular people, prefaced by a more general discussion on being second-generation Indian-American. To present their views, I utilize lengthy summaries of and quotations from interviews and discussions I have held with them. I introduce the Indian/Indian-American musician Vijayasree Mokkapati and the second-generation Indian-American Vasanth Venkatachalam, and discuss their experiences and views of Karnatak music in the U.S. Moving to non-Indian Americans, I begin with a discussion of several performers and teachers of Karnatak music, including Jon Higgins, David Reck, and T. Temple Tuttle. Portions of two interviews follow: on Harriotte Hurie’s studies in India, her views on gender in Indian music, and her daughter Maya, whom she adopted while in India; and on Kay Poursine’s career in Bharata Natyam dance.
Being Second-Generation Indian-American

To provide a background to the first set of interviews, this section refers to selected statements pertaining to the artistic and cultural lives of immigrants’ children, drawn from both Indian and Indian-American publications. Compared to their parents, second-generation Indian-Americans experience different issues and problems as they define themselves. The second-generation must juggle many forces as they grow up in a setting different from their that of their parents. The younger generation’s experiences provide a clear example of the fluidity of identity.

Based in New Delhi, the weekly news magazine India Today also publishes a North American edition, which regularly includes a “North America Special” section that chronicles the bi-cultural lives of Indian-Americans, both immigrants and their children. An article by Rekha Basu entitled “American Born Confused ‘Desis’” [ABCDs] refers to a (somewhat disparaging) term often applied to Indian immigrants’ children raised in America. These children experience the pressure to conform with the social, behavioral, and career norms of the U.S., the country in which they were born and raised. But they must simultaneously live up to their parents’ expectations, which may be rooted in memories of an India that
they left several decades ago but which has subsequently changed. She writes:

Since Indians started flocking to the U.S. in the 60s after immigration laws were liberalised, they have been trying to raise the perfect Indian-American child—someone who will carry on the parent’s religious observances, marry within the community, feel a primary allegiance to India and yet make a mark professionally in the U.S. In short, be traditional, adaptable, all-American but an Indian under the skin.4

These children and young adults often, as Basu notes, “confront the dilemma of being torn between two cultures.”5 The dual pressures on their lives may create great internal tension in their quest to fit in, be happy at home, and be themselves. Basu writes that the second generation faces difficult choices:

To an extent, Indian Americans are destined to be misfits in both cultures. Those trying to assimilate completely into American society to the extent of denying their Indian roots, eventually discover that it can be a closed club.

And those who closely follow the course charted for them by traditional parents may well succeed in shutting out outside “American” influences but the cost is an insularity that comes with being strangers in a foreign land.6

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4. Rekha Basu, “American Born Confused ‘Desis’,” India Today (August 31, 1989): 98. Desi means Indian. She writes, “… the more conservative parents still cling to outdated notions of what’s still socially acceptable back home—little knowing that some of the very things they prohibit are accepted in urban middle class Indian society” (100).


At worst, life may become extraordinarily difficult for second-generation Indian-Americans, especially when they face both extreme parental conservatism at home and harsh discrimination outside. Basu notes that this intercultural zone can be akin to a war zone:

Caught between the flux of cultures, hemmed in by the traditions of one and rejected by the prejudices of another, these children are living in the war zone.7

Discriminatory treatment, harassment, and violence have an impact on the second generation. Such problems are reported more widely in community publications than mainstream news sources: a recent issue of India Abroad carried a report on violence and hate crimes targeting Asian-Americans.8

However, for some Indian-American children, the conditions necessary for happiness and success are available to them. Basu feels that knowing one’s heritage can be combined with finding one’s own direction to


8. Matthew Strozier, “Rise listed in attacks on Asians in New York State,” India Abroad (May 1, 1998): 41. An example from the story demonstrates one man’s strength in the face of hatred:

On April 13 . . . a South Asian employee of a newsstand in a Brooklyn subway station was beaten by a group of teenagers.

The man, Mohammed Khan, 29, said when he tried to call the police, the youths took his phone and yelled, “Why don’t you go back to your country, you Indian.” Khan said he tried to reason with the teenagers, saying that in America, “everybody came from somewhere.”
produce happiness:

The most well-adjusted among them balance the two worlds, drawing the positive influences from both while having independent paths. These tend to be the ones whose parents allow them room to explore while providing strong role models, teach them the values of their Indian heritage and expose them to India through frequent travel. In short, these are the exceptions among the ABCDs.  

One aspect of their heritage that parents may introduce is the study of Karnatak music or Bharata Natyam dance. Lessons may even be forced upon the children, done in the hope that it will ensure their sense of Indian identity in the future.  

Indian-American publications often include pages devoted to the second generation. India Abroad, a New York-based weekly newspaper, publishes a section on what it terms “The New Generation.” Here, guest columns and letters express a wide variety of viewpoints about the conditions and direction of the lives of second-generation Indian-Americans. Researcher of Indian-American life Sunaina Maira wrote of the need to find balance within a hybrid identity:

There is a very real dilemma, and much of it stems from the deep-seated belief held by many that one must choose between “Indian” and “American” (which stands for middle-class white) identities, that one cannot be many things at once. Of course, as a visible ethnic minority, ethnic identification is not always a matter of choice, but these options are further constricted for the

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10. Mention of parent’s forcing their children to study Indian arts was made to me by several people in the course of researching this thesis.
second generation by expectations of authentically reproducing a transplanted identity.

Some second-generation adolescents develop hybrid identities that fuse elements of the different traditions that have shaped their upbringing. For many this happens symbolically, with an increased interest in Indian music and dance and an effort to take courses in Indian languages and religion in college. As part of this process, traditions interpreted by the second generation have the potential of being recreated, renewed, and even revived.

It is time to acknowledge that viewing identity as static, or tradition as fixed, leads to a dismissal of the experiences of second-generation adolescents who grow up in multiple realities. To balance many cultural realities is, in fact, to be engaged with some of the most important identity questions of twentieth-century global culture.\textsuperscript{11}

South Asian university students at many American campuses conduct regular cultural variety shows, showcasing their talents in drama, dance, poetry, and music; folk and classical traditions are often present, the programs varying with the backgrounds and knowledge of the students. For understanding the Indian-American culture these students and others create, it is essential to realize that identity does not rest in a fixed state.

In another edition of the “New Generation” page, cultural geographer Sanjay Kharod writes of the contradictory nature of one’s identity:

I find it hard to speak about my cultural identity—be it labeled Indian-American, Americanized, or some other name—as being concrete and fixed. Indeed, it is full of contradictions, which is inherent to being Indian in 1996 America. These contradictions are O.K. because our individual definitions of our identities are

\textsuperscript{11} Sunaina Maira, “The Identity Issue: How They Handle Complex Identities,” \textit{India Abroad} (March 15, 1996): 40. I have adapted a phrase from her article title into the title of this chapter.
neither incorrect nor completely accurate. We need to recognize the openness of identity, which is often considered to be closed and unchangeable.\textsuperscript{12}

Kharod’s notion of an “openness,” similar to concepts in Maira’s essay, is important for understanding contemporary Indian-American life. As shown by the following cases, the study and performance of South Indian art music can be found ‘in the mix’ of someone’s sense of place, heritage, and self. Indeed, I would like to suggest that the identity of each artist throughout this entire study has such an openness.

\textsuperscript{12} Sanjay Kharod, “Cultural Identity: It’s Time to Look Ahead in Defining Identity,” \textit{(India Abroad}, July 26, 1996): 44. Elsewhere in the article, Kharod, a geographer interested in racialization, writes:

Through my work I have found a different way to look at society that points toward the broadening of the definition of cultural identities. I do this because I believe that we live in a curious future time where there are now constructions of particular defensive, closed and exclusive definitions of cultural identity—both here in the U.S. and even in India. These constructions are advanced as a way of warding off or refusing to live with difference and are derived from a form of cultural racism that does not look to ideas of biological inferiority but now seeks to present an imaginary definition of cultural identity as a unified cultural community.
Vijayasree Mokkapati: Vina Artist, World Citizen

Both as a child and as an adult, Mokkapati has lived in the United States and India. Mokkapati’s father and principal music teacher is the late M. Nageswara Rao (1926-1993), a noted professional Karnatak musician and player of the vina [plucked string instrument with frets, wooden body, and gourd resonator]. In his youth, Rao left his home state Andhra Pradesh to attend the Central College of Karnataka Music, a music conservatory in Madras, a large coastal city in the southerly neighboring state Tamil Nadu. Here, he adopted a new playing technique, utilizing a different playing position and new sense of gamaka [note shape or direction]. At the college he learned under four vina and four vocal teachers, with a focus on the the Tanjavur court style of Karnatak music. Soon after Rao graduated, he joined the same College as a vina instructor. Throughout his career, he was one of the top performing Karnatak musicians, and was also noted for his advocacy of acoustically perfect unamplified chamber settings for Karnatak music.

Vijayasree Mokkapati has been immersed in music since early childhood in India. Her mother and father both encouraged her and all their children to learn Karnatak music. She began to take formal vina lessons from her father at about age seven. Initially she studied varnams

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13. Mokkapati’s case amply demonstrates the inherent limitations of terms such as “second-generation.” It precisely the complexity of her identity that leads me to include her here.
and kritis, thereby learning her instrumental technique from compositions rather than from the standard exercises and simple gitams [songs]. As a junior high school student in the late 1960s, she lived in Middletown, Connecticut, where her father had taken a teaching position at Wesleyan University for several years.

During his time at Wesleyan, Rao recorded several albums of Karnatak music that were distributed in America and elsewhere. Mokkapati related stories of her early memories of America, such as meeting her father’s
colleagues and traveling around Connecticut, experiences which have had on her a lasting impact.

Later in college back in Madras, Mokkapati majored in Sociology. Following graduation, after two years of intensive music study under her father at the Central College in Madras, she received the title Sangit Vidwan. Soon thereafter her father left India to teach in the West again, having established Nadopasana, an institute of Karnatak music based in Paris, France. Mokkapati established a branch of this school in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, where she taught Karnatak music to many children. After several years there, she studied for an Master’s in Sociology at Madras University, and then taught music privately from her Madras home.

International experience forms an important component of Mokkapati’s identity, beginning with her childhood time in the U.S., and later hearing her father’s stories of Paris. She returned to the U.S. in 1986, on the invitation of Robert E. Brown, to attend San Diego State University, from where she earned an M.A. in ethnomusicology. Immediately thereafter she came to Wesleyan, where she had earlier lived as a child, and later earned a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology. In her career, she has had a variety of experiences in the areas of ethnomusicology, Western and Indian systems of musicology, and in vina teaching and performing. She
pointed out her underlying priority: “My interest, from the beginning until now, always has been vina and will be vina. That’s my medium of expression.”

In the course of her development as a performing musician, Mokkapati has studied with more than one teacher, as did her father Rao. In some cases, her teachers were the students of her father’s teachers, giving the father-daughter duo stylistic continuity. We discussed how this varied learning experience had an impact on her development of a personal musical style. She explained that her father had successfully blended favored aspects from all of his teachers’ styles into his own unique style: “He imbibed everything and said, ‘This is the way I am.’” When they played together, Mokkapati tried to match her father’s sound, gamaka, and expression, and naturally he is the most influential teacher with whom she has studied. But ultimately her musical outlook, like Rao’s, has been to absorb many styles and synthesize them into her own individual style.

One musical area in which her vina performance style might diverge

14. The biography and quotes in this section on Vijayasree Mokkapati are from numerous informal personal communications, and an interview, March 21, 1998.

significantly from her father’s was in improvisation. In their many duo concerts during the last ten years of his life, they were able to perform a composition such that their two vinas sounded as one. However, when they played alapana [free-rhythm improvisation] before a piece, the musical ideas they brought forth were often quite different. They worked together in such a way that one player would initiate a phrase or longer passage, the other might add occasional notes of emphasis, then one or another would play the next phrase. Similarly, in tanam [unmetered pulsed rhythmic improvisation] they would often trade phrases one after the other, as equal voices responding to one another yet sounding autonomously.  

Mokkapati says her father did not specifically train his students, either Indian or Western, in Karnatak improvisation. There were no fixed patterns given in their lessons, such as other teachers may employ to teach improvisations. His students were encouraged to find their own voice in their improvisations.

In our discussions, I asked about how her personal sense of cultural identity may shape her perception of what Karnatak music is about.

16. The improvisational forms alapana and tanam were more suited to Nageswara’s approach of freely creating one’s own phrases. Because of tala [time cycle] and sahitya [text], in swara kalpana [metered improvisation with solfege syllables] and niraval [metered improvised melodic variations on text], there is less scope for the self-expression he sought, for one must keep these improvisations within the meter and text. Accordingly, Nageswara spent much less time in performance exploring the possibilities in swara kalpana and niraval, and favored alapana and tanam.
Mokkapati stated:

I grew up bi-culturally—that plays a big role in the way that I am and the way that I look at music. Also, indirectly I have been influenced by Krishnamurti. So, I don’t think of the music as uniquely contained in South India—it hasn’t been for a long time now. I just say it to be “Karnatak music.” I’m not going to place it in one area, saying it is Indian or non-Indian. Nowadays, I don’t think it can be classified as such. It is from South India.

Thus for Mokkapati, Karnatak music has extended its boundaries far beyond South India: it is internationally known, studied, played, and loved, and need not be limited to its place of origin.

I then asked if Karnatak music had a specific spiritual meaning for her. Rao, her father, had been deeply moved by the teachings of philosopher and spiritual leader J. Krishnamurti (1895-1986), who had taught both Indians and Westerners, in part through long-term residencies in California, other sites in the U.S., and Europe. Krishnamurti once said,

I do not want you to follow me. . . . You have been accustomed to being told . . . what your spiritual status is. How childish! Who but yourself can tell you if you are beautiful or ugly inside?  

Mokkapati was influenced through her father by such ideas of Krishnamurti. Thus for her Karnatak music can be a ritual or an expression of spirituality, but it can be very personal and unlike what others may define as “religious.” She said of the religious dimension of Karnatak music:

Because of Krishnamurti’s influence on my Dad, we never thought of music as a religious experience. We looked at it as . . . a totally different discipline. He did think of playing music as a ritual. You’ve seen Indian places in the home where there is an idol for worship. . . . Like that, the idea of playing music was for him spiritual, though he never talked about it, he never said “you can’t do this.”

Krishnamurti’s ideas about knowing and defining the self have been put into practice by Mokkapati. In much the way that she perceives Karnatak music to have changed, Mokkapati herself transcends categories and boundaries in her life:

I have been referred to as a “World Citizen” because of my so-called “crisis” of being bi-cultural. I am neither Indian nor Western. . . . It is complicated. The good thing about being bi-cultural is that I can pick and choose what I want, when I want it, and where I want it. That’s good. But at the same time it makes you feel almost stateless, because you don’t fit into one category.

In today’s world, the question of identity is becoming so important, because people can move around the globe so easily. Even if I don’t want to be categorized, people do want to put me in a category. That’s where my resistance comes—I don’t want to be uniquely Indian or Western. I am one of those people who has learned to co-exist with both.

The pressures she has experienced are thus somewhat unlike those articulated above by Basu, Kharod, and Maira; Mokkapati mentioned neither family conservatism nor mainstream rejection. Instead, she has felt the pressure to define herself in a simple category, which she vehemently rejects because she is comfortable with her identity.

Mokkapati noted the push-and-pull of bi-culturality that she has witnessed among Indian-Americans on university campuses and
elsewhere. In her view, the second generation is often suddenly placed under more pressure to conform to traditional Indian ways of life as they become adults. Thus college can be a time of both assertion of and rebellion from an Indian identity, depending on the forces and desires in an individual’s life.

Fig. 6-2. Karnatak music at Wesleyan, with Vijayasree Mokkapati. L-R: Artist-in-Residence Ramnad Raghavan (mridangam), visiting artist A. Srinivasaraghavan (vocal), and graduate student Vijayasree Mokkapati (tambura). Crowell Concert Hall, Wesleyan University. May 1, 1997.

In the U.S. and India, Mokkapati has had extensive contact with non-Indians who study Karnatak music, including those she has taught and are her father’s students. In our interview, I asked about her impressions of non-Indians studying Karnatak music. She spoke of some motivations she had noticed in certain people:

Joseph: How do you think Westerners can benefit from Karnatak music? Can it affect their sense of self, or at least their musicality?
Vijayasree: Initially, I think it starts with the idea of understanding another culture, experiencing another culture.

At the same time, a lot of musicians wanted to learn Indian music for the sake of understanding what is improvisation, by using rules. Indian music, whether North or South, has rules: there is no such thing as absolute improvisation. I think a lot of people got confused by that, because they assumed that improvisation meant, anything goes. Whereas, people who have learned either North or South Indian music would find that there are a tremendous number of rules they have to follow. Particularly in the South. . . .

What I want is somebody to understand a musical system that is different, where I can get into a dialogue with the person. . . . I want to de-exoticize the whole thing. I want to start with this musical exchange.

Her goals, of having a social and musical dialogue with people from various backgrounds, can be more easily realized when she is able to interact both musically and socially with those who have an understanding of her background and perspective.

Vasanth Venkatachalam: Second-Generation, Karnatak Vocalist

Vasanth Venkatachalam is a South Indian classical singer who is presently finishing his undergraduate studies at Wesleyan University, where he has a double major in Mathematics and Philosophy. His parents were born in the Southern Indian state of Kerala, though they primarily lived in Madras until they emigrated to the United States. Vasanth was born in Alabama, then while in elementary school moved with his family
to Wilmington, Massachusetts.

Vasanth had piano lessons in Western music in Alabama, but did not continue when he moved to New England. Vasanth began formal lessons in Karnataka music just before he enrolled in high school. His teacher was Mrs. Malathi Sharma, who lived in nearby Andover, Massachusetts. Initially he had a lesson of one hour every week, then after about a year his lessons increased in duration up to two and one-half hours. He followed the standard course of study, learning to sing swaravali and gitams, beginning with “Sri Gananatha.” Sharma then taught him several varnams, including those in the ragas Mohanam, Kalyani, Sankarabharanam, Todi, and Aboghi. He went on to learn kriti compositions from her. Vasanth did not receive notation from his teacher for the pieces he learned: “I would record each session, and just practice by ear.”

Vasanth occasionally attended what he termed “musical get-togethers,” in which all the students would meet in a student’s home, and each would perform one composition. Early on in his studies, he also performed at local festivals in honor of composers Tyagaraja and Dikshitar, held at the New England Hindu Temple, in Ashland,
Massachusetts. In high school he performed twice at the well-known Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana, which I asked him about: 18

**Joseph:** I remember noticing that over one thousand Indians had gathered in this place in Cleveland. Did you feel connected to people there, was there anything interesting about seeing so many Indian people there? Was there any reaction to that?

**Vasanth:** [Laughs] I don’t remember having any reaction.

**Joseph:** I did, when I first went, not having seen this previously. What about your own performance, how did you feel about it or prepare for it?

**Vasanth:** I was quite nervous the first time. But once I got on the stage and performed, it was no big deal.

**Joseph:** Did you feel like the setting was religious?

**Vasanth:** Like a temple?

**Joseph:** Yes, those events are often done in temples too.

**Vasanth:** I never got the feeling.

**Joseph:** But they talk about it being an offering, when you sing, giving respect to the saint. Did you know about Tyagaraja’s life before you went there?

**Vasanth:** Somewhat [at that time]. He was a major composer.

Certainly at the present time Vasanth has a keener understanding of Tyagaraja’s impact on Karnatak music than then. Having previously attended Indian music festivals, the Cleveland scene was not surprising to him.

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Before Vasanth began lessons in Karnatak music he had heard recordings at home, for as long as he could remember. He mentioned these recordings as being an important influence on him, contributing to his growing interest in classical music. His father has an extensive collection of cassette tape and compact disc recordings of both South and North Indian classical music, as well as devotional music; he also makes video recordings of many concerts he attends. Growing up, Vasanth heard bhajans [devotional songs] that his grandmother sang at their home, and he learned to sing some of these songs from her. Later, relatives in Canada exposed him to classical singing and encouraged him to study.

**Joseph:** Your parents obviously were very supportive, did they force you to do it?

**Vasanth:** No, no. The way it started was, I started by learning these religious songs called bhajans, under my grandmother, I was just curious so I tried that out. And I would do that, I would sing those on a regular basis, a daily basis. This was before I got into any of this musical training. Then, my parents and I, along with my grandparents, went to Toronto, where my dad’s aunt lives. She’s really into music. When I heard her sing, I got really interested, I got interested and curious, especially the technical aspects of the music. I didn’t know you could do these things with the voice. I got very curious. That’s how my interest started.

**Joseph:** Then did you ask your parents to find a teacher for you?

**Vasanth:** Yes. Both ways: I wanted to do it, plus my family encouraged me too. We found the teacher.

Vasanth remembers going to listen to performances by visiting artists from India at the N.E. Hindu Temple. There, he would also hear music
and chant used in rituals and festivals. Vasanth did not become more involved by attending youth groups or summer camps sponsored by the temple, though he recognizes the temple as a site for music and culture.

Vasanth choose to attend Wesleyan based upon the quality of the departments in which he wished to study, and for its setting not being in a large urban center. While the environment would be favorable for him, Vasanth also wished to continue studies in Karnatak singing under Music Department faculty member T. Viswanathan, with whom he was already studying. Vasanth’s first teacher had moved to another city, so in his last year of high school he began to travel to Middletown every two weeks for lessons from Viswanathan. Vasanth had heard him in concert at Wesleyan’s Navaratri festival, afterwards meeting him and subsequently beginning his studies. Although he had already learned a number of pieces under Sharma, he started over at the beginning with Viswanathan:

**Joseph:** Did Viswa start you over again with basic things?

**Vasanth:** Yes, just like this [swaravali]. A lot of time spent on the scale exercises. Because when I first started out, I had to strain myself just to keep the intonation right. These things didn’t come very easy, so he had to spend a lot of time on the scales.

**Joseph:** Did you start to use gamaka on the scales? And different ragams?

**Vasanth:** Yes. And different ragams.

Of the pieces he already had learned, some were re-taught by Viswanathan, while some were not. Vasanth found that making the shift
to Viswanathan’s style of expression, especially in terms of *gamaka*, was not too difficult. He already knew the basic form, text, and notes of the composition, and just needed to concentrate on re-learning the oscillations, stresses, and slides of the notes:

**Joseph:** It that difficult? You have to kind of forget about something.

**Vasanth:** It’s not... I didn’t find it that difficult to switch over, partly because I’d learned the piece before. Of course I took a while to get all the oscillations right.

**Joseph:** Do you think that the way you perform now is something like his style, regarding his interpretation of *gamakas* for each *raga*? Do you feel you are able to do that?

**Vasanth:** I feel I am getting closer and closer to that style. Of course there is no perfection yet, that’s a long way to go. But I think I am getting closer and closer to that... at least for the songs I’ve been taught.

Vasanth is presently Viswanathan’s most advanced Wesleyan student, and he has recently performed as a support vocalist in a number of Viswanathan’s concerts. While this supporting role is an excellent opportunity for a student to learn and observe their teacher in concert, it would not be possible if Vasanth had not learned Viswanathan’s style.

One aspect of Karnatak music that most appeals to Vasanth is the difficulty and challenge it presents. He particularly enjoys singing long,
slow compositions in “heavy” raga, such as Todi. Complex pieces require 
diligent practice, vocal control, and concentration. I asked him if the 
devotional content of the pieces was of primary importance:

**Joseph:** Why do these long pieces appeal to you? Is it something about the music?

**Vasanth:** It is more challenging, I find. It’s very challenging for me to take a slow piece, if the tala is very slow, with a lot of 
oscillations, for which I have to put a lot of effort into keeping intonation right. Whereas with a faster piece, it can slip here and there, but the slips won’t be as blatant.

**Joseph:** True. What about the underlying meaning of these texts? I don’t often know what it is I am singing about; I have a general idea, “It is devotional, this is about Lord Rama,” but sometimes I don’t know what each word means. When I see Viswa perform I get the feeling he knows exactly what each word means; and it is hard to get to that. Are you able to understand some of the texts better than me?

**Vasanth:** No, I think I’m at the same level. I also feel that these are devotional pieces, but I’m not trained in that language, I don’t understand these languages well enough to understand word for
Partly, I’ve been concentrating more on the technical aspects of the music and trying to get those down. That’s especially what I’d be interested in the first place.

Joseph: Did you ever consider playing an instrument? Some instruments, there’s a lot of these sort of “technical” issues.

Vasanth: I never considered it, but I was very interested in the technical aspects of voice. Building your voice up, to that [high] level.

Joseph: It is very different, it is inside, you can’t see it. It is kind of abstract.

Vasanth: Right. Then once I got into singing, for a few years . . . I decided that’s what I would concentrate on, rather than starting fresh with an instrument. I didn’t want to spread myself too thin. So, I stayed with this. There’s a lot to work on here. That’s why I haven’t taken up an instrument.

Vasanth’s music is important to his sense of personal identity. He is involved in what is for him a very enjoyable activity. He has attained a proficient level of performance, and recently gave a Senior Recital of Karnataka vocal music. He sang a complete program, including compositions from the genres varnam, kriti, and tillana; he also performed most kinds of improvisation, such as alapana, swara kalpana, and niraval. Although he plans to continue learning and performing, his

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19. Vasanth is fluent in his parents’ Tamil; however, Karnataka music is also sung in Telugu, Sanskrit, Kannada, and Malayalam. Furthermore, contemporary spoken languages often differ significantly from the language of the music’s poetic texts, written over the past few hundred years.
primary goals at present include personal improvement and satisfaction, rather than the rewards of stage performance:

**Vasanth:** I haven’t been that crazy about giving solo performances. I enjoy accompanying the teacher, Viswa, [sitting] in back, when he requests it. I enjoy that. But, just going out and giving my own concert . . . I didn’t study music just so that I could go out and give concerts in front of people. I studied it more for myself. What I enjoy is going into the practice room and practicing. Practicing these *kritis* by myself. That’s what I enjoy most.

**Joseph:** Is it because it is a challenge? Or because it is a way to improve yourself?

**Vasanth:** Yeah, it is a way to improve myself, in the technicalities. Also, I feel good afterwards.

**Joseph:** Physically? Mentally?

**Vasanth:** Yes. I feel good afterwards.
Despite his modesty about giving solo concerts, Vasanth has performed in professional-level concerts on many occasions, including as a support vocalist for his guru Viswanathan’s flute/vocal recitals, and as a vocal accompanist for Bharata Natyam dancers Lakshmi Knight and Lauren Paul (respectively, these three artists are the brother, daughter, and student of the famous dancer Balasaraswati).

Regarding Vasanth’s sense of cultural identity, Karnatak music definitely plays a role. He has had contact with many facets of Indian culture through music study, such as language, religion, and a relationship with a guru. Had he lived in India, he said, some aspects of his music study may have been different. For example, though he is fluent in Tamil, had he been raised in India he would have had an even better familiarity with the languages of the compositions. He has been able to travel to India several times and is very comfortable when visiting there.

Rekha Basu wrote in *India Today*:

\[\ldots\] for many second generation Indian Americans, the contradictions of their dual status are nowhere more in focus that during visits to India. It can be painful for youngsters expecting to feel at home to find the differences between them and their Indian-born counterparts being driven home.\[20\]

However, Vasanth did not express such problems when visiting his parent’s country.

\[\ldots\]

I asked Vasanth if he thought of himself as Indian, American, or both. His response indicated that I hadn’t suggested enough possibilities: “I don’t think in terms of these categories.” He chooses not to confine himself to such categories. When I suggested that, if he were to have children someday, they may enjoy learning Karnataka music as a means of learning about their cultural heritage, he replied:

**Vasanth:** Depends on a lot of things. What kind of things they’re suited for. I don’t know if everyone is suited for this kind of [activity]. People might not be cut out [for it].

**Joseph:** Do you think studying Indian music is a way to learn about Indian culture? Is it a way to study Indian philosophy?

**Vasanth:** Right. By learning this music, and paying attention especially to the texts [of the] compositions . . . it is a way to learn about those aspects.

Vasanth is already active in transmitting Karnataka music, having served as one of Viswanathan’s teaching assistants for several semesters. At present, myself and several other graduate students are learning Tyagaraja’s Arabhi *raga* Pancharatna Kriti from Vasanth.

**Joseph:** Do you enjoy teaching us?

**Vasanth:** Yes, I do. Because that helps me learn more, too. It helps . . . me improve my abilities too. Especially with the tones, intonation.

**Joseph:** You have to be confident that you’re doing it correctly also, if you’re going to teach someone.

**Vasanth:** Right. Plus I think teaching has improved [my performance] too. As a result of teaching I’ve improved my ear.
Joseph: For this composition?

Vasanth: Well, as a result of teaching in general. I think I’ve improved the attention I give to various subtleties, in the songs when I sing. I am able to pick those up very quickly, when I make a mistake I am able to [perceive] it. It wasn’t like that when I first came here. . . . I think the teaching experience has improved my musical experience a lot. It wouldn’t have been that way if I had [not done] any teaching, I wouldn’t have improved as much.

Non-Indian Karnatak Musicians in America

Of the non-Indians who have studied Karnatak music in the U.S., some have taught this music privately and in university settings. They include: Harold Powers, Robert E. Brown, Jon B. Higgins, Jody Cormack, Douglas Knight, David Reck, David Nelson, Gordon Korstange, and Matthew Allen, all of whom were at some time associated with Wesleyan University as students or teachers. Their published work ranges from analysis of the repertoire, styles, and techniques of Karnatak music, to writing on the South Indian cultural context of the music, to reflective essays on their own experiences.²¹

Jon B. Higgins

Although all of the above musicians have been active as performers, in this regard the achievements of the late Jon Higgins (1939-1984) are singular. He performed Karnatak vocal music to favorable reviews for critical audiences throughout India and America, and also made several commercially-distributed recordings in India. In addition, he was a gifted vocalist in the Western classical style, choral conductor, dedicated university administrator, compassionate teacher, and devoted husband and father.

Jon Higgins became interested in South Indian performing arts after seeing a performance by Balasaraswati at Jacob’s Pillow, in Lee, Massachusetts (discussed in Chapter Two). In his memorial to Higgins printed in the journal *Asian Music*, Viswanathan writes of Higgins’ first major performance after a period of intensive music study with Viswanathan in Madras as a Fulbright scholar (1964-67):

Over the months of study . . . Jon learned a number of compositions with the sensitivity of a good Indian student. The Madras December music season had come and gone, and the Tyagaraja Aradhana Festival was imminently approaching. I felt that at this stage of his progress he should sing whatever he had learned at Tyagarajasvamy’s *samadhi* and receive the saint’s blessings. Alattur Subbayyar, the festival secretary at that time, was in support of the idea. When we went to Tiruvaiyaru, Jon was very frightened and nervous at the thought of facing thousands of *rasikas* [educated listeners]. He suffered even more when he was told that his short performance would be broadcast nationally on All India Radio. The day he was to go on stage he was a physical and mental wreck. But the audience was delighted,
and astounded that a foreigner could take such interest in the art music of South India, and that he could sing so well and with such bhava [emotion] and bhakti [devotion]. What they did not know was that even with his great talent, how hard and with how much commitment he had worked for over two years. When people said that he must have been born on the banks of the Kaveri River in his previous birth, Jon took it as a compliment but knew the truth lay in his long hours of devoted practice.  

Higgins later founded with Trichy Sankaran the Indian music program at York University, Toronto, where he taught from 1971-78; and he returned to Wesleyan—where he had earned all of his degrees, B.A., M.A.,

Fig. 6-5. Cassette covers of recordings of Karnatak music by Jon Higgins released in India.

and Ph.D.—to be the Director of the Center for the Arts, and Professor of Music. Higgins’ life was tragically cut short when he was struck by a drunk driver as he walked his dog near his Middletown home. Viswanathan writes, “We can be thankful for his contribution to the world of music, but most important is the legacy he left of promoting cultural understanding through the arts.”

David Reck

David Reck is a composer, ethnomusicologist, and vina player. He studied the vina for many years as a disciple of Thirugokarnam N. Ramachandra Iyer, and later studied with K. S. Subramaniam, himself a Wesleyan graduate and the founding director of the Chennai-based Brhaddhvani, Research and Training Centre for Musics of the World. In Reck’s essay “Nurturing a Tropical Flower in the American Soil,” he identifies three factors arising in the 1960s that have facilitated Indian music’s presence in the U.S.: performances in the U.S. by top artists from India, the founding of university world music classes and programs, and reform of immigration laws. He fits himself into the Indian music scene

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of America as a Western composer who choose to leave his prior musical world for years of study with vina teachers.

Reck teaches at Amherst College, Massachusetts, where his course offerings include a world music class with a component on the music of India, a seminar in Karnatak music, and lessons in vina. In teaching the vina in private lessons, he has made some adjustments in teaching methodology to suit the American context. He typically meets his students for only one lesson per week, resulting in their having less exposure to his playing than he had to that of his teachers:

To compensate for the lack of one-on-one teaching I encourage them to learn to read precise Sargam [solfege] notation . . . so that they practise correctly. We also make extensive use of audio cassettes. Students are encouraged to practise along with recordings of their lessons and to listen to and study these recordings in the philosophy that once the ear and mind get it the hand will follow.25

The students in Reck’s classroom courses are from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, but he wrote in 1997 that his recent private vina students have all been ethnically Indian:

. . . there are those students who are interested in serious study of Vina. Some are children of immigrants from India, some are spouses or professionals born in India who wish to begin or reintroduce themselves to music learnt as a child. In the past I have had a number of American students of non-Indian backgrounds study for periods of upto the full four years of college education, but I have had none in the past eight years.26


This change may reflect a broader shift in American culture, in that fewer non-Indian Americans today have as much interest in aspects of Indian culture as was found twenty and thirty years back in the U.S. Indian music study is somewhat impractical for the career-minded, too. Reck offers that, Karnatic Music can be taught in America in a variety of ways and in many contexts. A teacher must recognize the various needs, backgrounds, and goals of his or her students and constantly make adjustments. There is little opportunity for leisurely learning of Karnatic Music over many years and for the commitment which such learning would involve. For the student there is basically no prospect for a career in Karnatic Music performance in any way, shape or form. One must study music even at an advanced level for one’s own enjoyment and one’s inner heart.27

T. Tuttle

T. Temple Tuttle is a Western musician, ethnomusicologist, and player of the South Indian drum mridangam, which he studied under Ramnad V. Raghavan. In his presentation at the Sangeet Research Academy’s 1996 “Seminar on Indian Music and the West” in Mumbai, he writes of how he and other Westerners have become interested in South Indian music:

Westerners have been attracted to Indian music in many ways, such as listening to live concerts or recorded performances, taking courses in Indian music, or as an extension of studies in Indian history, philosophy, or archaeology. What begins as a vague interest often becomes a fascination, and ultimately for a few, a calling. This process takes many years, or only a matter of hours. In my case, a single lecture cum demonstration on

Carnatic rhythm gave my entire professional life a new direction, one which I have followed for a score of years.\textsuperscript{28}

Tuttle welcomes the shifts of the past several decades in American interest in India: “the era of surface attraction, or exoticism . . . is long past.”\textsuperscript{29} As he wrote for the second symposium on “Teaching Musics of the World,” held in Basel in 1993, “We live in an era of international awareness which transcends that of any historical era.”\textsuperscript{30} I believe these two ideas are linked, in that today’s increased awareness can work to displace the “exotic” quality often ascribed by Westerners to Asian cultures.

Tuttle is a music professor at Cleveland State University, and his course offerings include solkattu [rhythmic percussive-syllable recitation], and Karnatak music appreciation. His classes always include a strong component on Indian history and culture:

Indian music cannot be performed, taught, or appreciated without being infused with the culture which produced it. This can be difficult when the student has not lived in India, whether or not his/her family is Indian. Indian children [in the U.S.] . . . are more influenced by Western culture. . . . The great expansion of multicultural education in the West has not significantly embraced the cultural history and philosophy of the subcontinent.\textsuperscript{31}


\textsuperscript{29} T. Temple Tuttle, “Indian Music in Diaspora,” 176.


231
He perceives the need to teach all of his students about Indian culture, because of gaps in their knowledge. Even Indian-American students may not have previously learned about some aspects of Indian culture relevant to Karnatak music.

From my own experiences

Before turning to the interviews I offer one example from my own teaching of beginning Karnatak vocal and flute students. In the Spring 1998 semester at Wesleyan University, I taught vocal music to a group of four undergraduates, of whom three are citizens of the Caribbean nation Jamaica and are of African heritage. As such, their musical and cultural background is different from my own, in terms of listening and performing. Like most non-Indians who take up the study of Karnatak music in the U.S., these men had little prior exposure to South Indian culture and music. Yet they brought an interest and enthusiasm to the material, having been inspired to study by a concert on campus the previous semester.

My students this semester did not have Western music training as a part of their schooling in Jamaica. For myself, with training in Western music theory as well as other systems of music, Western terminology often clarifies for the student certain aspects of South Indian music, such as melodic intervals, concepts of drones, and intonation (being “flat” or
“sharp”). An unexpected challenge that my Caribbean students posed for me as their teacher was that I was unable to teach any of the materials of Karnatak music in Western music terms. But this situation provided an unexpected benefit: I needed to clearly present the South Indian material on its own terms, avoiding the crutch of translation. In the end, they successfully performed at the Indian music students’ Spring concert.

Fig. 6-6. Poster for Indian music students’ concert at Wesleyan. Students of T. Viswanathan, Ramnad Raghavan, and Harriotte Hurie. World Music Hall, May 6, 1998. Design and photography by the author.
Harriotte Hurie: Hindustani Vocalist

Harriotte Hurie is North Indian classical vocalist and presently is a doctoral student in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University. She is knowledgeable in both the Northern Hindustani and Southern Karnatak systems of Indian art music. Hurie was first exposed to Karnatak music in 1969, when she heard V. Ranganayaki, M. Nageswara Rao, and others perform at Navaratri festival concerts at Wesleyan. Following this she traveled to India to study in the music department of Benares Hindu University [BHU]. Also known as Varanasi, the city Benares is located on the Ganga River in the state of Uttar Pradesh, North India, and is an important religious, cultural, and musical center of India.

HURIE’S Hindustani music guru is Pandit Balwant Rai Bhatt, a vocalist and faculty member at BHU. Hurie has studied music from him over a period of more than twenty years; she regularly stays in India for extended periods of study and brought Bhatt to the U.S. for a concert tour. Hurie is an accomplished North Indian classical vocalist, and regularly performs and teaches the genres khyal, bhajan, and thumri.

HURIE’S principal teacher of Indian music theory has been Prem Lata Sharma, also on the BHU music faculty. From Sharma, Hurie learned Karnatak as well as Hindustani music theory, and heard many visiting artists perform at house concerts in Sharma’s home in Benares. In the 1970s as an M.A. student at Wesleyan, Hurie learned more about Karnatak
music theory from T. Ranganathan, and learned vocal music from T. Viswanathan. When she returned to Wesleyan to begin her doctoral work in the 1990s, Hurie served as a teaching assistant for Viswanathan’s Karnatak vocal classes and continued her studies with him. She performed a kriti at the Middletown Satyanarayana Temple’s Tyagaraja Aradhana in 1996.

Hurié has written about the oral transmission of music in India, the relationship of a guru [teacher, master] and chela [student, disciple], and the female courtesan singers of nineteenth century North India. In 1990, she conducted interviews in India with musicians and dancers concerning the links between North Indian tarana and South Indian tillana [both dance compositions]. She is currently researching the musical practices and methods of blind musicians in India.

In our first interview we focused specifically on the issue of gender in Indian music, based on her experiences of the Indian classical music scenes in Benares and Boston, Massachusetts (her present home).\(^\text{32}\) I have selected passages in which the artist speaks about some aspects of the gendered nature of Indian music, and describes how men’s and women’s roles are found in the music and its practice.

Hurie’s Perceptions of Gender in Indian Music

Hurie noted that certain aspects of Indian classical music define different images or roles for men and women, and that in many cases this difference places restrictions upon women’s autonomy and freedom of expression. Indian music’s gendered quality is seen in stage presentation conventions for live music, in instruments, in student-teacher relationships, and in song texts. Most women music students at BHU could only enroll as students of vocal music, whereas men could study both singing and instrumental music. Bonnie Wade has noted this as well: “it is far more usual for females to be vocalists” in India.33

Women in India are restricted to singing in part because of the images they project while performing on-stage. Hurie explained their need to display a sense of “purity”:

[Gender] is hard to delineate, because it is not anything anyone wants to talk about. But there is a way in which I noticed people, when they described female singers, often they said, “Oh, she always wears a white sari.” Now the only person who wears white used to be a widow. Or someone would say, “She doesn’t wear any jewelry when she performs. She’s so pure.”

It was then that I began to notice that women had to make an effort to distinguish themselves as not beautiful, erotic women when they performed, They were singing to God, or they were singing for the pure music itself. And even to someone like [classical vocalist] Parveen Sultana, who is a Muslim, and performs with her husband on-stage, he’s a singer and maybe one of her gurus too. There’s ways in which, it seems to me, women,

even though they’re singing khyal, have to emphasize that they’re devoted to the music.34

Therefore, Indian women must project a devotional appearance while performing in order to be perceived as respectable within Indian society. This purity may offset past associations of music with prostitution, or the shame of receiving the gaze of unknown men while on-stage. A “pure” stage appearance includes a religiously-minded costume and demeanor.

Concerning gender issues in the roles of music students and teachers in India, Hurie found that power differences between them varied according to gender. For example, the manner of a musician’s use of the tanpura [drone-lute; tanpura in North India; tambura in South India] in performance is often not the same for male and female musicians:

You’ll notice in performance practice, male vocalists don’t play the tambura. Women do play their own tamburas, even though one of their students might play a second tambura behind her. The female vocalist is not served entirely by her students, you see, she’s supposed to play her tambura. It’s a subtle thing but it’s right there in your face, it’s quite noticeable.

Male musicians can thus expect more from their students, in terms of acts of service that must be rendered to them; female teachers do not always wield as much power over their students.

Huriè noted gender issues concerning the music faculty of Benares Hindu University. In the early 1970s the music faculty of BHU was

34. Interviews with Harriotte Hurie, Middletown, CT, December 11, 1997, and March 19, 1998. All unattributed quoted passages in this section are drawn from these interviews and personal communications with Hurie.
overwhelmingly male (over four-fifths), but by the mid-1990s women
faculty comprised nearly half of the teachers. However, their teaching
assignments remain divided, in that women are mostly on the faculty as
vocal teachers, while men teach both instruments and singing.

Despite these observations, in other aspects of their relationships there
is considerable equality and freedom between male and female musicians
at BHU. Hurie observed that students of either gender can study with a
professor of either gender:

**Harriotte:** Vocal music is totally O.K. for women to teach [to both
men and women].

**Joseph:** I guess you are a good example of a women having a
male teacher. That’s acceptable?

**Harriotte:** Totally.

**Joseph:** And the other way: would there be men studying with
women teachers?

**Harriotte:** Yes, although in the university, in the college setting, it
is so very public. There are big classrooms, and there’s anywhere
from three graduate students in a class singing, up to twenty-five
or thirty. It’s a very open place. But you could have cross-gender
guru-chela [teacher-student], no problem. That’s been common
for a long time, I think. Not living with the guru necessarily
anymore, but going to the guru’s house.

The language of songs in classical Indian music may be superficially free
of grammatical gender, but may nonetheless imply an underlying
gendered “voice.” Singers perform texts of a variety of poetic forms in
several old and modern forms of Indian languages. We discussed gender images in such texts:

**Joseph:** Is there anything about the texts and the material that was gendered in any way? Say, like a point of view of a devotional subject or object?

**Harriotte:** Not in the devotional texts so much, you don’t feel any gender. Except that some of them are written by [the poet-saint] Mirabai, supposedly, and from her point of view: she’s talking to [the God] Krishna. But that would have no effect on who is singing it. And the *thumri* [a light-classical genre], that’s one of the clevernesses of the *thumri*. And that cleverness filters over into *filmi* music with *thumri*, *ghazal*, approximately similar kinds of forms. . . . You’re going to hear the [neuter] “you” form a lot more than a gendered form.

**Joseph:** It is more ambiguous.

**Harriotte:** Yes. And that’s why the *thumri* is so powerful, and why it appeals to both sexes without any problem. Because it is always “you”, so you can imagine yourself as the person singing to someone else, or as if you were being sung to. You have Hindi language ungendered pronouns, which makes it work even better.

**Joseph:** “Uus” [her/his].

**Harriotte:** “Uun keliye” [for him/her]. You could avoid genderizing it. But certainly the *thumri*, and I think the *ghazal* although I am a little less familiar with the texts, I think it is seen from a very feminine point of view. And if you’re a man singing it . . . you might still re-imagine it as a feminine delivery. It’s made very flexible.

In sum, for the cases of teacher-student relationships and of song texts, gender issues are not seen to be as divisive or discriminatory as when instruments and stage image are considered.
**Hurié’s Experiences as a Student in India**

While the above observations by Hurie are rooted in her personal experiences as an American woman studying Indian classical music in India, they are general observations about the musical culture of India. In the following, she addresses issues of gender in Indian music that are derived more directly from her individual experience as a music student in India.

Regarding Hurie’s personal mobility in Benaras, she often adopted localized gender imagery as a means of effectively integrating herself into the community:

**Joseph:** Would just being in India itself make you think about who you were as a woman?

**Harriotte:** Oh yes, it made me think a lot, because Benaras is an extremely conservative city, religiously and socially speaking. Women of an upper caste don’t go out by themselves, to do things. So if I wanted to go to an all-night concert, of course I’d go with my husband, or I’d go with two or three other people. You wouldn’t just go by yourself. That whole issue of autonomy or being independent came into question. And I was so eager to fit into the culture that I certainly wasn’t going to break the cultural norms, you know, when I was there I wanted very much to fit within that.

**Joseph:** Things have changed in India, maybe not as much in Benaras as in Bombay. There’s more mobility in some of the larger urban centers.

**Harriotte:** Benares is a really conservative place, an incredibly conservative place. You have to realize that my whole existence in India was an oxymoron to everybody. First of all, a blind woman was not a marriageable person. Second, if you’re married, you should have children—and I didn’t have children. And I was
a student; you’re not usually a student and married. That has changed, but not for the most part.

**Joseph:** And you were American!

**Harriotte:** And I’m American. None of it made much sense to your average-bearer, it just didn’t make a lot of sense. But that’s O.K. Also, as you know, I’m very outspoken. As you know from the Hindi films, there’s sort of two types of women [in India]. There’s the Sita-women, who are very quiet and submissive and beautiful, don’t make any waves. Then there’s the Gitas; there is this film *Sita aur Gita*, and they just typify [the roles].

But Gita is so bold and so forthright, and speaks to men freely, that she’s almost associated with the courtesan-prostitution side of things, even though she may not be. So there is the sort of ideal Sita-like virtuous woman. Yet there is some recognition of boldness too. And I took on—the second or third time I was there—I really took on the bold persona. I’d talk to anybody.

Hurie addressed the ways she has felt empowered by Indian classical music, which has less to do with her being an American woman singer, than with the fact that she is blind. Through her study of Hindustani music, she has been successful in reaching a full understanding of a music practice and tradition because this particular genre has an oral tradition. She had been frustrated by earlier experiences with notated Western music:

**Joseph:** Do you think studying Indian music has something to do with your own conception of your own gender in any way? Did it empower you, or make you feel differently than you had before?

**Harriotte:** Not that I could say, not immediately.

**Joseph:** Maybe not as a woman, but as a human?
**Harriotte:** Well, I certainly found my spiritual, physical, and musical home. Part of that was that it was the first oral music that I encountered. And I had been banging my head against the mental wall of, “a ‘real musician’ reads notation.” And then when I ran into Indian music and went there for two years, I found out, “My God! Here’s an art music that doesn’t really rely on notation.”

And so, in that sense, it was electrifying. It was just amazing to me that you could master rules, master your voice, then play, and play with different people at different times, that you didn’t know before. It was very empowering! In that sense, it wasn’t gender-empowering per se, but it was very personally empowering.

A unique aspect of her relationship with her *guru* Bhatt is that he too is blind.

**Hurie’s Experiences in the United States**

Leaving Benaras for Boston in the interview, Hurie discussed some of her experiences related to Indian music in the U.S. We explore questions of gender regarding other non-Indian American performers of Indian music. While most of her colleagues are non-Indian men, she feels that they have been very supportive of her work. In contrast, my own musical experiences have been predominately among Indian immigrant women, who also have encouraged me to study Karnatak music.

**Joseph:** What about when you come back to the United States? That’s the other half of this whole thing. I’m sure things are different: people aren’t doing it to become good, eligible wives, etc.

**Harriotte:** Well, one thing I’ll say is, in the 70s, there’s absolutely nobody studying North Indian vocal music. I was a real anomaly,
. . . such an anomaly that I got some very nice attention, in the sort of low-profile concerts, house concerts, and stuff like that. And it was really quite nice, because I didn’t feel like I was concert-hall worthy, but I sure did enjoy small house-concerts and stuff like that. It was really pleasurable.

I think I gave myself a really hard time because there were so many [more] men involved in Indian music than were women. There weren’t that many woman involved, whom I knew, in the places I was living, and the things I was doing.

Joseph: Do you think that [these men] didn’t want to perform with you?

Harriotte: It was pretty positive really. I got a lot of encouragement from Bob Becker, who is now a world-renowned percussionist, when he played tabla for me, invited me up to Toronto at one point. I got a lot of encouragement from Steve Gorn, other people.

Joseph: When I started doing this a few years ago, the house-concerts I went to were all Indian immigrants, and most of the other students were housewives, or maybe professional, but mostly women. The house concerts you were in, in the 70s, might have been all Western.

Harriotte: They’re all Western students. . . . It was all Western students at that time, who were spending time together in the Boston area. I think the people who were in New York, like Steve Gorn, had an interesting mixture between Western student-performers and Indian. There was more of a mixture.

Joseph: Maybe immigration patterns are different there.

Harriotte: Yes, I think so. Then in Boston it began altering, too. And when I started teaching Indian music in the late 70s, early 80s, I had never imagined having Indian students, and right now, except for a Wesleyan student or two, I have four or five Indian students. That’s a big change, too.

This last shift, of teaching more Indian-American students at present, recalls Reck’s experiences at Amherst College, as noted above. In my own
experiences with Indian music in Cleveland, my teacher was a woman and nearly all of her students were women. Although such an all-women pattern emerges in groups of music students in India as well, it may be more pronounced in the U.S. because of the busy professional employment of their husbands, or social pressures that discourage the men from participating. However, Indian music students at Wesleyan are of various racial and ethnic groups, and both sexes are proportionately represented.

Fig. 6-7. Harriotte Hurie (vocal), accompanied by Peter Johnson (tabla). World Music Hall, Wesleyan University, July 8, 1997.

**Hurié’s Daughter Maya**

Hurie adopted an Indian infant in 1990 while studying in Benares. Maya, Hurie’s now eight year-old daughter, lives with her in Boston and

35. My teacher Shakuntala Murthy is profiled in Chapter Five.
has been studying Bharata Natyam dance for the past two years. Such lessons may be the best way for her to learn about her heritage; according to Meriam Lobel, the parents...

... feel they want their children to study classical Indian dance because it provides them with an understanding of Indian culture that is not readily available to young people growing up here. While learning bharata natyam, children memorize stories of the deities' lives, they hear the Sanskrit, Tamil, or Telugu language of the songs, and they learn to use their bodies to depict the symbols that convey the attributes of the gods of the Hindu pantheon. Some students here say that they have learned much of what they know about their religion through dance.36

As an Indian adopted by non-Indians and being raised in the U.S., Maya’s sense of identity has been shaped in important ways by studying Indian classical dance. Hurie recalls asking Maya,

Harriotte: Are there any girls in your school gym class that look like you?

Maya: No, I’m the only one.

Harriotte: How about in the Bharata Natyam class?

Maya: There’s only one little white girl!

Maya has been very intent in learning the complexities of Bharata Natyam, and she is interested in many aspects of the dance: facial expressions, mudras [hand positions], foot movements, posture, and the stories she tells through dance. Maya learns about her Indian heritage by

dancing a story about Krishna, or about Ganesha’s attributes. She has already developed an appreciation for the aesthetics of Bharata Natyam, such that she found a performance of North Indian Kathak classical dance to be lacking in the expressions and details she enjoyed in South Indian Bharata Natyam. Hurie’s immediate challenge regarding Maya’s studies is to encourage her without making her feel that she is being compelled to continue—Maya’s desire for independence means that she dances because she truly loves it.

**Kay Poursine: Bharata Natyam Dancer**

Kay Poursine is a Bharata Natyam dancer who was trained by the late T. Balasaraswati (1918-1984), one of the most famous dancers in the world this century, and the elder sister of Wesleyan University music faculty members T. Ranganathan and T. Viswanathan. Poursine studied European classical ballet for many years as a child, but felt from a young age that she had a great interest in dance forms that made extensive use of the hands, which ballet did not. In the 1960s in college she saw a performance by Shanta Rao of Bharata Natyam, the classical dance of South India. Immediately, she realized that this was precisely the art form that she needed to learn in order to achieve artistic satisfaction.

In our interview much of the discussion centers on Poursine’s relationship with her dance guru, Balasaraswati (usually referred to herein
as Bala). On a friend’s advice, Poursine attended a month-long intensive South Indian dance and music workshop sponsored by the American Society for Eastern Arts, held in 1973 at Mills College, California. Here Poursine first met Balasaraswati, the program’s dance teacher. Kay was struck by Balasaraswati’s presence before even seeing her dance.

Balasaraswati’s regard for her own appearance and beauty were such that she did not attempt to project a “glamorous” image, as did many other Bharata Natyam dancers. Poursine related first seeing her:

I’m in this big room with all these Americans and some Indians getting ready for the audition. Suddenly there was this hush, everybody had been talking, and there was this dead silence. I looked around; in comes Bala, with [accompanists] Lakshmi, Ramaiah, and Ramadass. And . . . my response was terror. I mean, I had never been frightened of someone. She was dressed very simply, not glamorous. See, all the dancers I had been working with before, glamour was the major thing. [Bala had] no makeup; but when she walked in, the dignity and the presence was catastrophic. It was like: “Oh my God! I’m going to have to dance in front of this woman!” And she just walked in to this

37. Interview with Kay Poursine, Middletown, CT, November 15, 1997. All unattributed quoted passages in this section are drawn from this interview and personal communications.


I saw [Ustad Allauddin Khan] for the first time at the All-Bengal Music Conference in December, 1934. In contrast to the other musicians, who were wearing colorful costumes, turbans, and jewels, and were bedecked with medals, he seemed very plain and ordinary, not at all impressive. But even in my immaturity, it did not take me long to realize that he had qualities that far outshone the gaudiness of his colleagues. He seemed to shine with a fire that came from within him. Although I did not know enough about music to discern his greatness, I found myself completely overwhelmed by everything about him.
room, and I thought “Oh, Jesus Christ!” I had never seen a person walk like that. The presence around her!

Within a short time that day, Poursine was told to dance for Balasaraswati. Although Kay had been studying Bharata Natyam for several years at this point in her life, she was intimidated by the teacher’s presence:

. . . then she said, “You!” And I walked out [to dance] . . . . She says, “Ramaiah will conduct, you dance!” So, Ramaiah started the beginning, and I thought, “I’m dancing in front of this woman!”

[My colleague] Gina was right [in her description of Balasaraswati]: the way she looked was like laser beams, you could just feel it, she was looking straight through you. I tried really hard to do the beginning, without knowing tala! Here’s the queen of laya [rhythm] and tala . . . . Then finally she stopped, Ramaiah stopped, and I was going to apologize [laughs], I was going to say “I’m sorry, I’m sorry!” And she looked at me, and she said, “Do you want to learn my style?” I said, “Oh, Yes! I do, I do.” Without even seeing her dance!

Poursine had been experiencing frustration with her previous studies of Indian dance under other teachers, and felt she was inadequately trained. She was delighted to have the good fortune to audition for a teacher who seemed to be so personally intense and artistically minded.

When she first saw Balasaraswati perform a few days later, the experience was for Poursine extraordinary and transformative, as meeting her had been. Kay described her powerful feelings while watching this woman dance: in Balasaraswati’s performance she suddenly saw for the first time the perfection that she had visualized, but had not yet witnessed
after years of searching. She saw a human who had achieved artistic perfection:

Kay: She performed two days after the audition. Bala walks in, she walks in very casually. She started the alarippu, and I sat there, and I thought, “Oh, no! This is it!” You know, “This is it! This is it!” And then she did [the sabdam] Sarasijakshulu, and then she did this varnam, I think she did Danike [Tagujanara] at that time.

Joseph: “This is it” means, this is what you had wanted to learn?

Kay: No, “this is the art.” This is what I saw. But then when she was doing the abhinaya [mimetic gestures for which Bala was renowned], I thought, “Oh no, she knows everything. She knows everything.” . . . it was a little too much to have Bala in class, it was hard to dance in front of her, knowing that she’s got all that.

Balasaraswati was widely regarded as the supreme master of abhinaya, narrative, mimetic dance that conveys a story or emotions. It differs from nritta, so-called “pure” dance of abstract movements. Abhinaya is textual interpretation, often expressed via compositions that take erotic love as a metaphor for religious devotion. The story is typically about a woman’s difficult life and harsh treatment by her husband, lover, or both. From a Hindu perspective, such pieces can be interpreted as explorations of existential crisis, the sense of losing oneself in spiritual ecstasy, or of having been abandoned by one’s god. Abhinaya is often improvised in concert; the musicians repeat a line of text on the dancer’s cue, and her
appropriate gestures and facial expressions present meanings that shift from the literal to the metaphoric.  

Poursine felt she had been significantly changed as a dancer and person by her experiences studying Bharata Natyam dance that Summer:

**Joseph:** So, the first summer [of study] was a couple of months?

**Kay:** First summer was a month and a half, and of course I went back to New York, just fanatic about the art, just alive and afire. And actually Bala as a person, I think, had a great influence [on me], in that it was the first time I had met a person who has given you a vision—it was like I could see a horizon. Whereas before, I saw nothing.

She went on to several more Summer sessions in other years under Balasaraswati’s instruction. These annual programs were sponsored by the American Society for Eastern Arts, featuring Balasaraswati’s siblings T. Ranganathan and T. Viswanathan as drumming and music teachers. From the early 1970s to early 1980s, the program shifted around the U.S. each year to locations on the East and West coasts.  

I hoped to understand Poursine’s perspective on the Indian-ness of Bharata Natyam. Given her teacher’s international outlook, including performing abroad and teaching many foreign students, had Poursine encountered a limit to how well a cultural outsider can comprehend and

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40. Personal communications, Douglas Knight, 1997-98.
perform this art? Furthermore, on a personal level, did Kay seek to replicate Indian culture?

**Kay:** I wasn’t actually interested in going to India. In fact, India was not very attractive to me. Bala was the art—“India” was not the art to me at all. And of course, Bala came back quite a few times, for residencies at Seattle, Berkeley.

**Joseph:** Did you study with her every summer then?

**Kay:** Yes, from then on. Frits deBoer in the Theater Department [at Wesleyan] said, “Kay, why don’t you start a masters?” I thought, “No, this is not the route for me.” And it was funny, because I got this letter, almost two days after I talked with Frits, an invitation from Bala to come and study with her in Madras. And so I went back to Frits and said, “Frits, I just got an invitation from Bala,” and he said, “O.K., you want to do a masters? You’ll get tuition remission, and you can do your research in India.” And I thought, “This is all falling together.”

**Joseph:** Was that an ethnomusicology program?

**Kay:** No, it was through theater; Frits deBoer was into the world theater thing. So I thought, “O.K., I’m not that interested in going to India,” I just thought, “Bala has invited me, I’ll have a chance to work with her.”

I just did not [at that time] connect this art with any kind of culture or country. I just thought, “This is so beautiful.” . . . I realized later, [Balasaraswati] felt this way about Bharata Natyam as an art, that nobody had possession of it, that it was so great that it could belong to anyone that really wanted to work, and study it. It didn’t belong to anyone or any country. And that’s another reason why I think that I was really blessed to have her as a teacher.

**Joseph:** A lot of people will say, “It’s the national dance of India.”

**Kay:** It’s not. According to Bala, I think she would say they’re wrong. That’s a weakness to consider [it] that [way]. You don’t know it that well, you don’t know this art. She would say, “If you say that, you don’t know this art.”
Joseph: That’s what most people say though!

Kay: Oh, yeah! Because they don’t know it. The people that say that really don’t know how big this is.

Kay told me that a dancer must bring their personal vision and life experiences to Bharata Natyam for it to be powerful. The dance transcends any particular culture, in that it can portray all human emotions; true pain and suffering can be important parts of the dance.

In contrast to the above ideas that Bharata Natyam expresses much more than Indian-ness, it still is rooted in Indian culture. Poursine’s first period of study in India in the mid-1970s was critical in shaping her understanding of the dance, as this time revealed more clearly to her the dance’s South Indian culture background. For several months, Kay lived in Madras with a few other American students taking lessons from Balasaraswati at her home:

I didn’t realize how important the Tamil culture—which you feel very much, especially in Madras—was to the art. I didn’t realize that until I actually lived there.

I feel that it is not contradictory to say that Bharata Natyam comes from Tamil culture, yet can transcend it: this art can convey the personal experiences of a dancer of any culture.

When Poursine had an opportunity to teach Bharata Natyam dance to Wesleyan University students, she felt it best to first seek permission from her guru Balasaraswati before embarking on the lessons. In doing so, the
question of teaching men arose; in dance, men are not encouraged to study certain items and roles in the repertoire. In fact, Bharata Natyam is regarded by some as a dance of women’s experiences, so that it is best performed by them:

In 1979, [Dance Department Chair] Cheryl Cutler approached me about teaching in the dance department. At first, I was very negative about it. Then Bala came for a residency here at Wesleyan that same summer. I asked Bala—I thought this would be the appropriate thing—I actually officially asked her if she would bless me for teaching. And she said, “Of course, of course.” I said, “But, do you have any words of wisdom?”

She looked at me and said, “You teach adavus [dance sequence], please teach complete adavus, please, for me.” I said “yes,” and then I said, “I think that there will be some boys who will want to learn.” She said, “You can teach them, but tell them”—which I have done, I have followed Bala’s advice—“please tell them that this is really for women.”

She never thought men should do this [dance], because the psychology in most of the really beautiful pieces, the padams, is meant for women to do. She said, “If you would like to teach them, please teach them adavus, and teach them maybe jatiswaram and alarippu.”[41] [That I must be] honest with them about the drawbacks: the full repertoire is really not for them, [I] cannot teach them the full repertoire. “As long as they understand that, as long as you are honest, you can teach these men.”

But then she said, “These men, if they have to learn it, then they have to do it [fully].” She thought that the original inspiration for

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[41] The padam pieces of a Bharata Natyam recital emphasize abhinaya, mimetic narrative dance. The forms jatiswaram and alarippu are nritta pieces that utilize only “pure,” abstract rhythmic dance movements; the varnam uses both. According to Poursine, Balasaraswati felt that both women and men could learn and perform abstract dance, but that only women may perform the story-telling dances, with themes of devotion and love.
this [dance] was for women. And there is, I think, in her vision of this, something that is particularly suited for women.

Poursine has taken on the values of her mentor and teacher in her own transmission of Bharata Natyam dance to other students. Poursine also emphasizes the building blocks of the dance, the *adavu* patterns that beginning students need to first master.

Finally, Poursine addressed the incredible artistry of Balasaraswati, so natural and great that it could not have been “produced.” It seems to be the consensus, among all I have met and read who saw Balasaraswati dance, that she was indeed one of the century’s greatest artists.

**Kay:** Bala had this incredible understanding of music, so she’d bring all this together. And bring in life, to an art that was actually [historically] going downhill, right before the end of the Raj [British colonial rule]. This art was in trouble.

**Joseph:** Where was she getting it from? How did she know all this stuff?

**Kay:** It’s Bala. There’s no other Bala. They come once in every several centuries. I don’t think you can say where it’s from. I think she had wonderful training, she had great guidance, but I think you’re born with some of this stuff. This is why I was just blessed to be alive at the time that I’m alive, and to have come in contact with an extraordinary human being, and given direction, given some knowledge. I just don’t think there are many of that type of artists, you just don’t come in contact with [them]. . . .

[On seeing Balasaraswati dance], you think, “Oh my God, this is incredible!” That’s where Bala stands in this. I think she was something of a vanguard. At that time, she really opened people’s eyes to the fact that [Bharata Natyam is] not crude pantomime as the only thing in this art—this a big art, this is a great art. The greatness in it—it is full of life, and it’s not dead.
I think a lot of [Bharata Natyam] dancers now, even the big performing artists, sometimes perform this as if it were a museum piece. “We have to go back to the past. We have to do it as in Kanchipuram or Chidambaram [pilgrimage centers],” and all that. They’re missing the point: the art is full as it is. You don’t have to change it, it’s just that you have to be competent, you really have to know what you’re doing.

Poursine continues to bring Bharata Natyam dance to life. Having been fortunate to learn from a great master, she performs and teaches throughout the U.S. to express the inner meaning and beauty of the dance.

Fig. 6-8. Kay Poursine performance poster. Wesleyan University, October 18, 1997. Design by John Elmore.
Conclusions

This chapter has presented quite an array of personal perspectives on the significance of the South Indian performing arts in America. Most of the persons interviewed here ascribe an “Indian” quality to the music and dance they perform, but this does not necessarily carry the same meaning as was found among first-generation immigrants discussed in Chapters Three through Five. Having been raised in America (for at least some of their formative years), the non-immigrants of this chapter have somewhat different ideas about re-creating Indian culture in the U.S.

For some of the musicians in this chapter, the practice of Karnatak music is an excellent means of instilling self-discipline, leading to a sense of physical and mental vigor and well-being. Karnatak music thus offers an individual the opportunity to perfect him or herself. For some, Karnatak music is a system of music that, while rooted in Indian culture, is at present far beyond the geographic and cultural space of South India. Thus it is a musical system that offers artistic expression first, and Indian culture second. For others, Karnatak music is useful because it is both a complex art music and an accessible oral tradition. And some find that South Indian performing arts have facilitated the fulfillment of their most important personal artistic goals.

Other aspects of the experiences of second-generation Indian-Americans and non-Indian Americans are more consonant with those of first-
generation Indian-Americans. For example, all musicians and dancers must enter a relationship with a *guru* or teacher, though for the artists of this chapter this may be a cross-cultural relationship that offers particular challenges, rewards, and meanings to both parties. All parties need to learn the same exercises, compositions, and dance steps, imparting a shared experience through which friendships and community may develop.

Fig. 6-9. Bonnie Novakov-Lawlor performing Bharata Natyam. She is a student of the late Balasaraswati. Accompanied by Vidya Sitaraman (vocal); not pictured: Gordon Korstange (flute), and Douglas MacKenzie (*mridangam*). Hartsbrook School, Hadley, Massachusetts. October 26, 1997.
Most of this thesis concerns traditional South Indian Karnatak music in the United States. In this chapter I will consider fusion music from the U.S. that incorporates elements of Karnatak music together with other musical genres. Many varieties of Karnatak fusion music are found in the United States, utilizing a wide range of approaches to the use of Indian musical materials, instruments, forms, and meanings. When performed in the U.S., traditional Karnatak music’s setting is an intercultural space related to both India and America. With Karnatak fusion, the music itself acquires an internal cross-cultural dialogue, so that it can be difficult to locate the cultural origins of a fusion musical performance. Karnatak fusion music is created by musicians who translate, transform, and transfer music between cultures.
When South Indian Karnatak music is blended with other genres the range of results seems limitless, and accordingly fusion’s constituent elements can be seen as a continuum of possibilities. In some examples of fusion, Indian musical instruments may be utilized with unconventional playing techniques, or Indian instruments may be played in an Indian style but for new musical forms or in combination with instruments from other musical genres. Some examples of Karnatak fusion employ non-Indian instruments but make use of Karnatak improvisations, song forms, and expressive qualities. In addition to possibilities related to instrumentation and technique, there is a range of performance contexts associated with Indian fusion performance. The performance context of fusion music in the United States may be intended to recreate elements of an Indian setting, or it may make use of mainstream American settings; or fusion may be disseminated through audio recordings and consumed at home.¹ The meaning of the music varies as well: the devotional element of Karnatak music may or may not be present; both American and Indian musicians, with different senses of identity, are involved in creating fusion music; and the notion of “Indian-ness” in the music may be subtle, overt, or somewhere in between.

¹. See: Eliot Bates, Ambient Music (M.A. thesis, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 1997). He discusses the most characteristic way to hear ambient music: with headphones in a darkened room, so that other senses are minimized and the music dominates the listener’s perceptions.
To begin this chapter I will briefly consider several significant audio recordings released by artists in both India and the West.\(^2\) I have selected works representing a wide spectrum of approaches to Karnatak fusion music, ranging from devotional to dance music. I will discuss recordings by U. Srinivas, Chaya Swamy, Shakti, L. Subramaniam, and Dissidenten. The remainder of the chapter includes portions of interviews with Royal Hartigan and Gregory Acker, two non-Indian American musicians who have studied Karnatak art music. They each possess a unique approach to applying their knowledge of Karnatak music to other types of music, and they speak extensively about the musical and ethical issues involved in their creative work. I will conclude with a short account of tape compositions I created from field recordings that I collected in South India and elsewhere in South Asia.

In this chapter, I have selected Karnatak fusion music and musicians both involving in cross-cultural collaboration and having a connection to America. As a result, many other forms of “fusion” that make use of South Indian art music with Indian genres are not presented here, for they

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\(^2\) I include two examples in this chapter with a European connection: U. Srinivas’ album was recorded in England but is a collaboration with a Canadian producer; Dissidenten is a German group that recorded in India with Karnatak musicians, though their work was released on a U.S. label. There are many other artists who have produced recordings of Karnatak fusion music, including Jody Cormack and Tom Ross, L. Shankar, E. Gaayathri, Kunnakudi, Laksmi Shankar, Sri Chinmoy, T. H. Vinayakram, Bill Laswell, Mychael Danna, and Asiabeat, but their work cannot be considered here due to lack of space. Pop star Madonna’s recent album *Ray of Light* (Maverick Recording Co. 9 46847-2, 1998) features a Sanskrit *mantra*, *filmi* chorus, and Indian percussion on “Shanti/Ashtangi.”
go beyond the scope of this study. Excluded from this chapter is the large, popular, and important field of Indian film music, in which Karnatak music has played an important role. Nor will I consider here jugalbandi performances that unite North and South Indian classical musicians in a joint recital. South Indian devotional music making use of classical elements is, aside from one example, outside of my scope as well.

A unique and very interesting example of fusion music can only be briefly mentioned: Richard Winslow’s “And So Forth.” Winslow had been instrumental in setting up Wesleyan’s ethnomusicology program. This composition was written for Karnatak vocalist and Wesleyan graduate Jon Higgins, to be performed by him and a Western classical orchestra. It was performed in 1975 by the Wesleyan Orchestra, conducted by the composer. In the opening, Higgins uses scales from ragas and sings Indian solfege syllables in what sounds like a hybrid of Western and Indian vocal techniques and styles, with both a broad vibrato and gamaka. It begins slowly, recalling alapana [free-rhythm improvisation], and builds to a peak like a mora [rhythmic cadence]. It suits Higgins well, for he was a great vocalist in both Western and Indian systems, and was a dedicated teacher of Indian music to students in America.

Recordings of Karnatak Fusion Music

An audio recording is a portable document that is easily able to cross boundaries, whether national, conceptual, or musical. The following fusion recordings were selected for consideration here because they constitute a variety of productions from many locations, by musicians with an assortment of motivations. An important element in this music is collaboration between Indians and Westerners, which varies in type and extent. In my discussion of each recording, I focus on musical instrumentation, style, and technique. In some cases, liner notes have provided further information on the artists’ motivations, compositional processes, and ideas about cultural interaction. All of the recordings here were acquired in the United States.

Mandolin Srinivas

U. Srinivas performs classical Karnatak music on the electric mandolin, imparting to him the sobriquet “Mandolin,” as he is often simply known. As a child prodigy he toured the United States in the 1980s; most years he still performs at the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana, where he received

4. Michael Chanan, Repeated Takes: A Short History of the Recording Industry and Its Effects on Music (London: Verso, 1995), 7: “the phonograph . . . turned the performance of music into a material object, something you could hold in your hand, which could be bought and sold.”
support early in his career. He is one of the most talented and popular professional Karnatak performers presently active in India.

In 1995, Mandolin recorded *Dream*, an album of “ambient-crossover-techno-fusion” music, in collaboration with Canadian producer and musician Michael Brook. The album was released by the Real World label, which categorizes it as music from “Canada” and “India.”

Liner notes describe the studio and compositional processes that were used for this album. Brook gathered an international set of musicians, with artists from Brazil, Canada, England, India, New Zealand, and the U.S. performing on the album. The recording was made in England at the Real World Studios.

Fig. 7-1. Cover art for the Mandolin Srinivas and Michael Brook album *Dream*. Note the juxtaposition of a twentieth-century electronic circuit board (recalling a lingam) with a seventh-century stone sculpture, Arjuna’s Penance (Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu). 1995.

5. U. Srinivas and Michael Brook, *Dream* (Real World Records, Carol 2352-2, 1995), notes.
Dream’s producer, co-composer, and instrumentalist Brook writes about the methods used in the recording process, in which musicians played improvisations based on one another’s live playing, and on pre-recorded material. The instrumentation for the album includes mandolin, violin, violoncello, samples, experimental guitars, percussion, vocals, bass guitar, Stick, and electronic keyboards. Brook notes that his initial intention was to record traditional Karnatak music, and the fusion happened after they were all in the studio:

Originally the plan was to record a traditional album of Srinivas’ music . . . I sensed there was potential for experimental work as well, so I went through my musical sketch books looking for things that could be adapted for him and I started some preparatory work with my sampler. . . .

The traditional record (Rama Sreerama) was recorded as a concert performance one evening and right after that we had a late night session where Srinivas and the violinist, Bhasakaran, played along with some of the sequences we had prepared.

On another evening Srinivas played with Nigel Kennedy and Nana Vasconselos in the Big Room. Sometimes just the three of them played together and sometimes they responded to pre-recorded tracks. . . .

. . . Prior to this Srinivas hadn’t worked very much with electronics, but he was interested in innovative ways of recording. For example, he had never used echo before but clearly he was aware of some of the possibilities of the studio because he had composed a piece for the traditional record that counted on him overdubbing his parts. He has a spirit of willingness to try new things. . . .

. . . We got this system going where I played the role of a conductor and used hand signals to say, “Don’t play, don’t play—wait” or “Just play a little bit—then wait a little bit.” . . .
Brook apparently did not attempt to control precisely what the musicians would play, but rather wanted them to react to one another, and to recordings and samples. This allows the musicians’ own expressions and musical training to be clear in the recording. Srinivas makes musical gestures on the mandolin just as he would in Karnatak music, playing passages similar to *alapana* or *tanam*. But rather than using the Indian system of compositions and improvisations, or employing experimental techniques in the actual playing of the instrument, his playing is recontextualized by Brook in an ambient musical environment. The studio setting is certainly not new for Karnatak music, which has a long history of recording. Rather, on *Dream* the forms of the pieces created, the compositional and performance processes utilized, and the sounds and orchestrations are new and different from traditional Karnatak music.

Brook also writes of his intentions for fusing Western and Indian musical sensibilities. He hoped to showcase Srinivas’ musical abilities and expressions in the Western setting of a modern studio, with its possibilities for manipulation of recorded sound:

There were certain themes and concepts around the making of the album but it was also very much “see what happens”, with Srinivas as the focus. I wanted to hear the more introspective, meditative spirit that he reveals and which I think is a big part of

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Indian music. I thought that if we could do something a little more ambient involving modern Western ideas of atmospheric music, it would make a nice contrast to the traditional record. One of the big challenges of the record was to try and encapsulate the large contrast of styles from the frantic, almost heavy metal sections, to the extremely tranquil sections of music.

. . . I am interested in the ornamentation of Indian and Arabic music where a lot of attention goes into how you bend notes and how you get from one note to another, rather than what the notes are, which is maybe a more Western focus.7

Brook notes that the processes employed were new to him as well as Srinivas. Brook viewed the album as a collage of various studio-generated sounds and performances. He writes,

. . . This is quite a different and new way of recording for me, where you grab moments with musicians and later turn them into pieces of music. It hasn’t been technically possible or easy to do until recently.

. . . Once we finished the initial recording sessions it was very much, “Well, O.K., we have got some amazing stuff strewn all over the floor, can we make something cohesive out of it?” There are elements of everything in it so we jokingly referred to it as an ambient-crossover-techno-fusion record!8

The Brook and Srinivas collaboration *Dream* demonstrates that South Indian Karnatak music has the potential to be processed and abstracted into new forms, such as Western Ambient music. In the case of this album, Srinivas’ musical ideas and mandolin performances are reconfigured by the technology of a sophisticated recording studio, and are

7. U. Srinivas and Michael Brook, *Dream* (Real World Records, Carol 2352-2, 1995), notes.
combined with instruments not found in Karnatak music. To me, the end results sound more like ambient than Karnatak music, which was the intention of the artists; but this particular ambient recording has an Indian component that is of central importance to the overall effect of the music.


Chaya Swamy

A long-time resident of Cleveland, Ohio, Chaya Swamy is a physician who has studied South Indian Karnatak singing. After several years of music study in the United States with her teachers Shakuntala Murthy and Ramprasad, she began to compose devotional songs utilizing South Indian music elements. In 1997, she returned to India, where she was born
and raised, to produce recordings of her compositions, and released the cassette *Apoorva Bhakti Sangama: Kannada Devotional Songs.*

Swamy wrote all the lyrics and set them to melodies and *ragas*; she was assisted in the studio by Ramprasad, who sang on most of the eight tracks. Together with the studio staff they orchestrated the album.

The orchestrations they created utilize many different Indian instruments, from both North and South India. Track one, “Baraiah Ganapathi Namma Manege” is performed by *talam, tabla, pakhawaj,* low- and high-range flutes, male vocal, *swaramandalam,* *synthesizers,* *tambura,* and *sitar.* During verses the accompaniment to the vocalist is primarily percussive, with some instrumental breaks at the ends of lines. Between verses melody instruments are featured. Track five, “Putta Putta Paadavanoortha” is performed by the above set of instruments as well as a folk *sarod.* Some compositions are preceded by *alapana*-like sections of free-rhythm modal improvisation performed by the melody instruments.

In Swamy’s album the Karnatak music quality is most apparent in the elements that she contributed: the devotional nature of the song texts, the use of Kannada [a South Indian language], the setting of melodies to Karnatak *ragas,* and the classical vocal styles of some of the singers. Other factors differentiate it from classical music: the instrumentation is typical

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for a recording of devotional music, and is not that of a classical Karnatak ensemble. The playing styles of the musicians are similar to those of semi-classical and filmi music recordings, and the use of North Indian instruments gives a pan-Indian feel to the cassette.

Swamy has since recorded a second cassette of her devotional compositions, which she is preparing to release. She feels that her musical productions are possible because of her ongoing study of Karnatak vocal music at home in Cleveland, which has imparted to her the ability to compose texts and melodies, and set them to ragas.\textsuperscript{10} Swamy finds it

\textsuperscript{10} Personal communication, Chaya Swamy. October 6, 1997.
enjoyable and satisfying to return to her home town, Bangalore, to 
produce these recordings. She has established a charitable trust to disperse 
funds from sales of her cassettes for humanitarian purposes in India. 
Swamy’s Karnatak-devotional albums are a means for her to be involved 
with Indian musicians in India, and to utilize the cassette industry to have 
her compositions heard in both India and the United States.

**Shakti**

Shakti was a well-known Jazz fusion band formed in the United States 
in the 1970s, consisting of two string melodic instrumentalists and two 
multi-instrumental percussionists. It was formed and led by John 
McLaughlin, a non-Indian who played a modified acoustic guitar with the 
group. Other members were from India: L. Shankar, a virtuoso violinist 
known as a soloist, and as a member of a South Indian classical violin trio 
with his two brothers; Zakir Hussain, virtuoso tabla master from North 
India; and T. H. Vinayakram, player of the ghatam, a clay pot Karnatak 
percussion instrument. Ramnad Raghavan played mridangam on their 
first album, during his first teaching appointment at Wesleyan University.

The band’s music pioneered the fusion of Jazz and Karnatak genres, 
with virtuosic playing of fast, technically demanding passages. Shakti’s 
compositions were written by McLaughlin and/or Shankar. Much of 
Shakti’s work is indebted to Karnatak styles of expression, regarding their
sound’s rhythmic density and melodic contours. On their album *Natural Elements*,¹¹ most songs have obvious South Indian antecedents; for example, Shankar’s “Come on Baby Dance with Me” utilizes the distinctive modern Karnatak raga Katanakutuhalam [in Western notes, C D F A B E G c - c B A G F E D C].

McLaughlin designed a modified guitar for his work with Shakti. Sympathetic strings were added, running at an angle under the playing strings; and the fretboard was scalloped with curved depressions between frets, to allow for increased bending of notes. These details of the guitar create a sound different from that of the usual acoustic guitar, and at times recall the sound of Indian stringed instruments such as the *vina* as he

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strums the sympathetic strings or bends a note like a gamaka.

McLaughlin, who is also the disciple of Indian spiritual teacher Sri Chinmoy, fused Indian and Western music and cultures in his popular collaborative work with Shakti.

**L. Subramaniam**

South Indian violinist L. Subramaniam is the brother of L. Shankar (a Shakti member) and L. Vaidyanathan, all three of whom were trained in Karnatak music by their father V. Lakshminarayana. Born in Madras in 1947, just before India achieved Independence from Britain, Subramaniam established his first career as a medical doctor, but gave it up to focus on music. He has since become an eminent classical and fusion musician. He was first well-known as a member of a classical violin trio with his brothers, and has a successful solo performing career. He began to perform Jazz-Karnatak fusion music in the late 1970s, beginning with *Garland*, an album recorded with Danish violinist Svend Asmussen.

In the late 1970s, Subramaniam moved to the Los Angeles area to teach and study at the California Institute of the Arts, a center for the study of Karnatak music on the West coast.12 Here he made many contacts in the

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12. The Cal Arts world music program was founded and directed by Robert Brown, who had been Wesleyan University’s first world music teacher in 1961; see Chapter Two for more information on his career. Cal Arts also featured T. Viswanathan and T. Ranganathan on its faculty, from 1970 until they returned to Wesleyan in 1975.
Jazz world and initiated musical collaborations with Larry Coryell, Stu Goldberg, and Joe Sample. He recorded the Jazz fusion albums *Fantasy Without Limits*, *Blossom*, *Spanish Wave*, and *Indian Express*. Since then he has composed the soundtrack for Mira Nair’s acclaimed film *Salaam Bombay*, among other projects. Subramaniam utilizes both an electric solid-body and an amplified acoustic violin for his fusion music. In traditional Karnatak classical performances he plays the amplified acoustic violin; his acoustic violin is fitted with a pickup at the bridge, and an amplifier is placed behind him on the stage. Amplification allows him to modify classical techniques, thereby achieving effects and rapidity via soft playing that would be inaudible on a standard unamplified violin.

Subramaniam’s album *Indian Express* utilizes an instrumentation of violin, guitar, *santur* [Kashmiri hammered dulcimer], bass, drumset, saxophones, flute, trombone, and synthesizers. It is stated in the unsigned liner notes that “. . . there’s no mistaking the Indian flavor all through.”

“Whispering Moods,” a beautiful ballad, also has an unusual time, being a 13-beat cycle with a very original harmonic progression to fit into the microtonal scale. Mani asks us to observe the violin solo’s Indian ornamentation, which brings out the spiritual aspect of this particular piece. Also pay attention to the voice of S. Vijayashree, as she blends in perfect unison with

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the violin, like another instrument, and how when she fades out, the violin continues on into a solo using the same pitch as the voice, so there seems to be no difference between the two.\footnote{15}

Such musical effects are commonplace in Karnatak music and should come as no surprise to an educated listener of South Indian art music—I feel that the “Indian flavor” is tasted by the uneducated audience. However, this album was released in the United States, and as such these notes would be appropriate for an audience largely unfamiliar with the Karnatak music components of Subramaniam’s fusion performance.

Fig. 7-5. Cover art from L. Subramaniam’s album *Indian Express*. 1983.

\footnotetext{15. L. Subramaniam, *Indian Express* (Milestone Records M-9120, 1983), notes.}
Dissidenten

The U.S. recording company Triloka released the German group Dissidenten’s album *The Jungle Book* in 1993.\(^\text{16}\) This label has released a number of other Indian-fusion recordings, such as the non-Indian American Jai Uttal’s albums that blend Indian devotional, Hindustani, Indian folk, American pop, and Jazz styles.\(^\text{17}\) Dissidenten is a band consisting of three men who sing and play flute, drums, guitars, and keyboards. Their album makes extensive use of performances they recorded by artists at the Karnataka College of Percussion, Bangalore, India. Also on the album are field recordings of religious celebrations and songs, as well as urban and nature sounds.

In a typical song from the album, an Indian musician is featured as a soloist while the Germans provide accompaniment. In “Love Supreme” (which refers to and quotes a composition of American Jazz saxophonist John Coltrane), a fast groove rhythm accompanies a female Indian singer and *konakhol* [vocal recitation of rhythmic syllables] by an Indian male. The liner notes state that the band would like to thank the Indian musicians “for their beautiful contribution.”\(^\text{18}\) It is not clear from either

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17. Some of Jai Uttal’s recordings are: *Footprints* (Triloka 183-2, 1990), *Monkey* (Triloka 7194-2, 1992), and *Beggars and Saints* (Triloka 7208-2, 1994). Uttal has studied the Hindustani *sarod* under Ali Akbar Khan at his school near San Francisco, California; and Uttal has travelled and studied in India as well.

listening to the music or reading the notes what precisely the Karnataka musicians’ roles were in Dissidenten’s compositional process. It appears that the South Indian musicians were recorded in Bangalore and later mixed into the band’s final recording. Dissidenten thus integrated traditional performances by Karnatak musicians into their studio mix and fusion creation.

Fig. 7-6. Inside illustration by Sri Arts, Bangalore, from Dissidenten’s album *The Jungle Book*. The band is depicted as Indian royalty and a saint, in a tableau of jungles, ancient Hindu temples, and South Indian classical music and dance performers. 1993.
Royal Hartigan: World Music with Integrity

Percussionist Royal Hartigan performs throughout the United States on drumset. He earned a doctorate in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University and presently teaches music at San Jose State University, California. Although his focus in playing, teaching, and writing is on Jazz and West African music, he has also studied Karnatak music. At Wesleyan he studied mridangam under T. Ranganathan, and solkattu with both Ranganathan and his successor Ramnad Raghavan, as well as learning Javanese, Jazz, and West African music traditions. Hartigan travels to West Africa every year to continue his studies of Ghanaian drumming and African culture.

While at Wesleyan, Hartigan produced an innovative concert series, “Blood Drum Spirit,” also the title of his dissertation. At many of these concerts various fusion forms were presented, with Hartigan’s teachers, fellow students, and guests featured as performers. More recently he has co-authored African Rhythms for Drumset with Abraham Adzenyah and Freeman Donkor. In much of his work, Hartigan translates the music of


one culture to the instruments and idioms of another. We discussed how he has made the musical translation from Karnatak music to Jazz.

“Tala Vadyam”

A piece of music based upon Hartigan’s experiences at Wesleyan studying Karnatak music is a composition titled “Tala Vadyam,” co-written by T. Ranganathan and Hartigan. This piece began as a solkattu lesson taught by Ranganathan, for which Hartigan composed a melody and arranged the piece for Jazz ensemble. Ranganathan’s lesson consists of phrases of decreasing length interspersed with phrases of increasing length (see below, fig. 7-7).\(^{21}\)

Ranganathan’s composition is set to an eleven beat cycle, sankirna rupaka tala [2+9 beats]. Hartigan’s contribution came to him “like a dream” one night after Ranganathan had taught the lesson. Hartigan sped up the tempo considerably, so that each akshara [unit of duration] occurred nearly

\(^{21}\) I think of this exercise as phrases with gopuccha yati [cow’s tail shape] interspersed with karvai [gaps] filled with srotovah yati [river shape].
Fig. 7-7. Notation for T. Ranganathan’s solkattu composition in an eleven-beat cycle. Courtesy of Royal Hartigan.

four times as quickly. The piece is perceived in a fast 5 1/2 pulse cycle, rather than the solkattu’s original medium-tempo 11. Hartigan composed a melody with one note for each solkattu note, and wrote chord changes, intending for a Jazz group to play the piece (below, fig. 7-8):
In performance Hartigan introduces the piece with a spoken description of the slower eleven-beat *tala*, teaching the audience to clap the *kriya* [hand gestures for a *tala*]. He then demonstrates the original *solkattu* patterns written by Ranganathan while everyone claps the *tala*.²²

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²² Performance by the Royal Hartigan Ensemble, MPR, Wesleyan University, February 28, 1997. My recording of the entire second set of this concert is available at the Wesleyan University World Music Archives.
the composition, bass and piano perform an *alapana*-like free-rhythm improvisation based on the South Indian *raga* Pantuvarali [in Western notes, C Db E F# G Ab B c]. “Tala Vadyam” follows with the band playing it as a head in unison. After a series of improvised solos the band returns to the head, concluding a nearly half-hour performance of the piece.

The composition is thus a collaborative effort that fuses Karnatak percussive techniques with Jazz playing styles and improvisational development techniques. Following a recent performance of the piece, Hartigan told me about the powerful nature of the rhythms, in Indian music and his composition:

> The theme that we worked out lasts maybe twenty-seven seconds, rather than ten minutes [as Karnatak song forms], so it’s much simpler. Yet, it still has some of the elements of traditional South Indian music, and as such I think it really represents a beautiful part of the Indian rhythmic design. . . . What we are is little babes in the woods, and I’m doing this thing that probably an Indian musician would say is like “2+2=4” [elementary]. Yet, even then, it’s still got a beauty and power to it, and when I play it I feel great. And I hope the audience enjoys it because I think it does have a nice, new, different sense of time.

. . . just like *ragas* are said to have spiritual essences in them, I believe that time feelings and rhythms do. And I think there’s a tradition in India of that. Therefore I feel that every way you play a rhythm has a spiritual essence.23

Refer to **CD Track 3** for a recording of “Tala Vadyam.” This concert included David Bindman on reeds, Wes Brown on contrabass, Richard

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23. This and all following quotes of Hartigan are from an interview with Royal Hartigan, March 1, 1997.
Harper on piano, Hartigan on drums, and guest artist Adzenyah on African percussion (though he is not on “Tala Vadyam”).

Fig. 7-9. The Royal Hartigan Ensemble conducting a workshop of the application of Karnataka and West African music to Jazz. Abraham Adzenyah’s studio, Wesleyan University. February 28, 1997.

The Ethics of Fusion

Hartigan regards music as an expression of culture. Traditional music is the repository of a people’s highest understanding of themselves, representing their accumulated wisdom:

I feel that the instruments and the melodies and the rhythms represent more than musical commodities. They represent the ritual, the acquired wisdom and history, the belief system, and the heart and spirit of the people they come from. Because of that, I feel that they have to be treated . . . like they’re special things. Almost like they’re people!
Hartigan therefore believes that when one plays music from outside of one’s own culture, it is necessary to approach the music very carefully and respectfully. This ethical standard applies to both traditional and fusion playing. Our talk was not restricted to any particular genre of music, and he advocates this view with any music a musician may perform, including his own playing of traditional and fusion South Indian music.

Hartigan explained his conviction that those who perform with musical instruments of another culture must appreciate and make use of more than just their potential sounds:

We are taking elements of, say, Native American, South Indian, West African, Javanese traditions, and using them. But it makes me uncomfortable to take just an instrument or a single [musical] thing and use it. Just, to use it. For me, it has to have a reason. When I play a donno, I have to play the things you play in Ghana on it. I don’t believe in just taking a donno and making things up. I believe in playing it the traditional way. . . . There has to be a reason to do it, to use an instrument or a melody or a rhythm or an element from a culture.

There has to be, in addition, a way that you use it. With respect, permission, knowledge, and possibly even presence and participation of a master artist from the culture. If not, then at least their approval. . . . It has to have a musical integrity from the tradition it’s in, and in the tradition that it’s being brought into. Or else, for me, there’s no reason to do it, because it doesn’t make a whole lot of sense to just play an instrument because it sounds good. That’s not enough of a reason.

Because there’s more to music than just a sound, and a rhythm, or the appearance of an instrument. . . . There has to be a certain integrity retained and maintained in both the old and new traditions. And a musical sense made of the use of the instrument. And it has to be serious. . . . I really wouldn’t want to use any world instrument in a way that’s a commercial thing, or
a pop thing. . . . For me music is a way of life, and a serious life thing. Anything less than that trashes what you’re doing.

Hartigan feels that it is best to keep traditional playing styles intact when one performs fusion music using traditional instruments. For any playing, one should have the approval of one’s teachers. It is important to maintain the integrity of the traditional source material.

Hartigan elaborated on the great importance of treating one’s traditional music teachers with great respect. Some form of compensation to them is appropriate, Hartigan said, particularly if the student earns money while utilizing the knowledge gained from the teachers.

I think if you ever make any [money] from [music], you have a responsibility to give it back to the people or the teacher you studied with, from whence the music tradition came. . . . More than money, whatever we learned from them—which is the knowledge itself and the joy that comes from it—we have a responsibility to return it back to them in some form, . . . to show appreciation.

More important than [money] is the commitment and respect to continue to do what they have taught us; to do it with integrity and spirit, and heart. To do it well, and give that music to other people.

And, when possible, to have their presence and participation, as tonight we had with Abraham. At the same time, in teaching the music, I will teach it educationally because I have been given permission to do that by Abraham and Freeman. But I’ll never represent the culture in public without a master [artist] from the culture there. . . . It has to be somebody that can represent the culture, because I will not play [music] in public and give the appearance of representing the culture, of being from that culture.
In America, music teachers can be invited to perform in student concerts as guests, which shows the student’s respect to the teacher, and to his or her music and culture. In South India, a Karnatak music teacher may ask a student to accompany him or her in concert, to train the student and publicly demonstrate the teacher’s acceptance of the student. For a student to compensate the teacher, gifts of services and materials may be made, but cash can be presented too, as in the ceremonial fashion of the Vijayadasami festival day. Certainly it is expected that a student must behave deferentially towards her or his teacher. Thus Hartigan’s approach has consonance with the expectations made of a Karnatak music student.

24. However, when student and teacher share a stage, the guru will usually be the featured artist of the concert. An exception to the usual practice of featuring the elder Indian musician as the primary artist in a concert involved another American, Jon Higgins. He was at times accompanied by his guru, Viswanathan, who played the flute to support Higgins’ vocal. Furthermore, in many Karnatak music performances it is not an unlikely scenario that accompanying percussion artists are senior in age and experience to the soloist, such as when an older mridangam player accompanies a junior vocalist. In Bharata Natyam, it used to be more customary that a student danced while her teacher sang or provided natuvangam [solkattu-like conducting and accompaniment of dance steps]. However, in current performance practice, accompanists are often hired professionals rather than one’s teacher.

25. Joseph Getter, ed., Navaratri 1976-1997 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 1997), 5. On this day, at the close of Navaratri, one should prostrate before one’s guru, and also learn a new piece of music. Offerings may be given at this time as well, including cash. In today’s modern setting, many teachers charge tuition for their regular lessons. While this may create a different relationship from that of the traditions of the past, it is still customary to give a gift on this day.

26. Many artists keep small pictures of their guru with them onstage, or with the home altar. When greeting the guru, a student might always touch the teacher’s feet, a gesture of humility and respect.
Hartigan does not feel strongly rooted in any particular musical culture in the way that his world music teachers grew up playing traditional music. Hartigan grew up with and performs Jazz music, but recognizes that it is an art form created by African-Americans, which he is not. Regarding his sense of his place in America and its musical culture, he said:

Royal: You have to ask the question, does that mean that I feel not part of any culture? Since music is an expression of culture, I’d have to say no, I don’t feel a part of any culture, I don’t feel a part of any musical culture. . . . The thing that I feel part of the most is the thing that I’m most immediately moved by in my lifetime, which is the African-American acoustical Jazz tradition. That’s the closest thing. But that doesn’t mean I am not deeply moved by Debussy, Wagner, Chinese Opera, Mariachi, Javanese Gamelan, Philippine [music], Japanese Taiko, Korean [music]—I love it!

Joseph: What is your culture?

Royal: I don’t have one. You never have a home again, I don’t have a culture again.

Hartigan seems to say that culture cannot be acquired intentionally: it is something that one is born and raised with, and it can be lost. Because many people today suffer displacement and rootlessness, the process of constructing an identity from one’s experiences is very important.

Some fusion forms are not successful, according to Hartigan, due to lacking the spiritual quality that is found in traditional music. Regarding successful and unsuccessful fusion attempts, Hartigan states:
The distinction has to be, ultimately, [on] the spirituality, . . . the heart, the commitment, the seriousness . . . [of] the music, all those things are factors. And that means that some things are not going to have [these things]. . . .

That doesn’t mean that some people are better than others, [but] there are some musical forms that are just trash. Now maybe that’s just my own warped opinion. Of all the pop styles, Afro-pop, Indonesian pop, . . . when you’ve heard the Gamelan and African drumming, you can’t [compare] . . . Those [pop forms] are like delusions, illusions, imitations of a Western imperialist neo-colonialist musical invasion.

I’m not trying to be negative, but if people [can’t tell the difference] between a sacred, ancient tradition that’s made out of wood and animal skin, and the twang of synthesized sounds in a pop guitar thing . . . There’s a spiritual difference there.

This feeling has motivated Hartigan to study traditional forms of music, including South Indian, Javanese, and West African music. Jazz is a more recently developed musical expression, but to Hartigan it possesses power and meaning that impart the spirituality of traditional music idioms. He plays Jazz and Jazz-fusion because of their power and meaning for him.

For Hartigan, sounds themselves can be understood as elements of culture, and as a direct means of respectfully understanding a culture. Although deeply interested in the cultures of the music he learns, and aware of the strong connection between a people and their music, Hartigan does not lose his focus on the immediacy of sounds, music, and
Therefore the practical teaching of music must be at the core of any study of world music:

The music is what it is about, not anything else. The music is an expression of culture, but it is the music that is the “thing.” That sound that you’re hearing on stage, that’s the culture. . . . I personally don’t think anyone has the right to even think or talk about [world music], never mind teach it or write a book about it, until they live it over a long, long time.

Knowledge of a music’s culture can be best gained through the practical study of the music itself, for this will reveal to the student many aspects of that music’s cultural systems and contexts. Similarly, for Hartigan, fusion music with integrity can only be created with respect and years of

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27. Hartigan discussed the immediacy of musical sound, the inadequacy of words about music, and the role of music schools in fostering knowledge of music and culture:

Royal: You heard what we were doing tonight [in concert], there’s magic in that. When you do a book about something, it’s O.K., but it’s about [music], it’s from a distance. . . . But it never . . . no research, no books, no thinkin’, no teachin’, no talkin’, no workshops, no lectures, could ever get to be one thousandth, one millionth, one megamillionth—of one note on a cymbal, one stroke, one sound. Because with that sound, it’s a spirit thing, it goes to the Gods, it goes to the infinite. Like tonight when it was happenin’, that was in another dimension, it’s not even in three-dimensional time anymore. It’s really creating a space for the Gods to descend. And they do, man. They connected us with the audience. For that little bit, we were one, we knew who we were. We were connected to each other and ourselves, and our environment around us, the spirits. It’s beautiful, it’s deep. That’s the problem with most schools now, maybe it always was.

Joseph: Well, it’s hard to contain this thing in a curriculum or course.

Royal: Of course, you could just let people play! And let everything come from that. That would actually be pretty easy to do, if people would just see how.
engagement with the society of that music:

Fusion has to be done, if at all, in a very specific way, with respect and heart-commitment, and spirit in the heart, from living it many, many years.

Gregory Acker: Raising Consciousness

My colleague at Wesleyan, Gregory Acker is an improviser, flutist, percussionist, educator, actor, and instrument builder. He has studied traditional Karnatak flute music, and the percussion accompaniment for Kathakali dance of Kerala, South India. Acker’s fusion music has been of two primary types: cultural-educational shows about his experiences in Kerala, a state of South India; and improvisatory music performed with his Louisville, Kentucky collaborators. More recently he wrote and directed “Daedalus and Draupadi,” a shadow puppet theater piece performed by musicians and puppeteers from Middletown’s Spencer Elementary School, Wesleyan University, and the community. Although the show was largely inspired by Javanese traditions and featured puppets and a Gamelan that Acker constructed, several musicians (including Acker, myself, Harriotte Hurie, and three of Hurie’s students) trained in North and South Indian music contributed a distinctive Indian component to the show’s music.
“House of Friends”

In 1993-94, Acker traveled to Kerala, a state in South India that interested him because the people there enjoy a high standard of living yet consume relatively few resources. He stayed at Mitraniketan [house of friends], a rural development center outside of Tiruvananthapuram, and learned from local craftspeople and farmers. While there, he wrote and produced a booklet, *House of Friends*,\(^{28}\) about his journey to Kerala, and back in America he produced a show of the same name about his experiences. To share what he had learned in India, he distributed the book and performed the show at arts centers, an environmental conference, and at schools. This educational show incorporates flute music, drumming, and storytelling to convey information about the arts, social life, sustainable development, and the environment of Kerala. We began our talk with his reflections on transforming his experiences in Kerala into a dramatic presentation:\(^{29}\)

**Gregory:** I developed a performance that I thought told the story of my trip, but also got across some of the information about the significant experiences that happened to me there. I had a really important encounter with a street-theater group that was doing AIDS awareness performance. I had some great slides that I took of that group, and with their permission used those as part of my performance. To deal with that issue here, but to talk about the


\(^{29}\) All quoted passages of Gregory Acker from an interview, March 17, 1998, and personal communications.
idea of raising consciousness, which I was trying to do with my performance.

[It’s] both about how we interact with “strangers” or “others,” and how we interact with our local community, and what sorts of things we can do to improve our quality of life. One of the strongest messages that I brought back for all of those groups had to do with using your local resources. Especially things like gardening, which was really big there. That’s an under-used resource here. Lots of people mow, they could just as well be tilling. Things like that, very simple things. And more complex things too, like religious tolerance, Kerala having a large Christian population, and Hindu, and Muslim. That’s a very interesting mix there that may have resulted in some of their quality of life.

Joseph: Do you talk about music?

Gregory: Well, I used music and storytelling as a way to communicate these messages. I would play [music] and tell a story, as an interlude, but also as a part of the story, in a more personal sense. Telling the story of meeting my flute teacher was part of that performance. Telling the story of my difficulty in learning the chenda patterns was part of my performance. Although in between the different patterns that I would play, I would tell other aspects of the learning process, and what it was like to be a frustrated student. Sharing those inner-most things. Other sections dealt with some of the more obvious external social things, the beauty of the plant life around, the AIDS awareness thing, and social difficulties that people were undergoing.

It was kind of a mish-mash of different aspects, and I wanted it to be as personal as possible because I didn’t want to speak for the people of Kerala, I wanted to speak about my experience there. And also to let people know that I had been up-front with my so-called informants, my friends, about what my mission was, that I was going to come back; and was it O.K. with them if I showed these pictures? And what did they think was stuff that I should tell?
Which was a ground breaking way of doing cross-cultural work, as far as I knew. I had not seen many storytellers tell stories from other places that actually gave the names of the people that told them the story, that actually showed a picture of them, that actually said, “Here are the circumstances under which the story was told to me.” More often it was that people got that information however they got it, and told the story like it was their own. I had a big problem with that.

The performing arts group that I am a member of, called Alternate Routes, which covers artists from the whole Southeast U.S., was doing a lot of avant-garde or socially conscious performance. That group had a very strong reaction, some positive, some negative, to the performance of this work. Some people were, “This is really great, because you’ve been very up-front. There’s no secret about what you did here, and there’s no mystery. You’ve uncovered that, you’ve shown a way to do this work.” Whereas other people said, “This is misappropriation. You’re dressing up like someone from India, and you’re not.” I wore a dhoti. So there were all kinds of issues like that.

The underlying issues of [Alternate Routes] had to do with people of this culture telling stories of other cultures, primarily African—that’s a big issue, about whether those stories are “ours” to tell, or not. I had a lot of feedback in both directions. I think that, in the artistic community at least, my work raised a lot of important questions.

In Acker’s project in Kerala, he took the approach of asking people in the U.S. what they wanted to learn from the people of India, and of asking people in India what they wanted Americans to know about their lives. His own journey would therefore serve as a bridge between cultures, and as a conduit for the exchange of ideas about the life, the environment, and music.
Improvisation

After his trip to India, Acker felt that his Indian musical skills had grown from his studies of flute and *chenda* [Kathakali percussion], but were not sufficient after only three months of intensive study for him to present an accurate and traditional performance of either Karnatak or Kathakali music. Furthermore, his home base, Louisville, afforded him little opportunity for interaction with other musicians trained in these systems. He found that certain aspects of South Indian music were, however, readily applicable in an improvisatory collective ensemble of which he is an active member. He began to utilize South Indian bamboo flutes in their performances:

*Gregory:* I didn’t feel enabled to pursue my musical studies without a teacher, an ongoing teacher. I certainly had developed some bamboo flute technique, and I applied that directly to my work as an improviser. But I wasn’t able to really play some semblance of South Indian music, other than the couple of pieces I had learned. I didn’t feel right doing so without appropriate accompaniment.

So, I opted instead to take the skills rather than actual concrete matter, and use the skill, in this environment with musicians playing guitars or whatever, and just play whatever I wanted to play.

*Joseph:* How did this music find its way into your music? Do you start with drones? *Ragas*?

*Gregory:* Yes, that is a good way of putting it. I’d say I felt more capable of playing the instrument itself, the bamboo flute or *chenda*, because of this work. . . . I guess it was more a matter of the discrete skills, rather than putting together a whole package of something that I would say could represent South Indian music.
Now I play bamboo flute better, I can play the instrument better, but I can’t play “the music.”

**Joseph:** What performances were you doing? Lots of improvised instruments, and a little bamboo flute in the middle of that?

**Gregory:** Yes. Or, more often for us, we would structure a particular improvisation with an idea of combinations of instruments that would sound good together.

**Joseph:** Did the bamboo flute go with anything?

**Gregory:** It tended to go better, to our ears anyway, with instruments that did have some Indian origin. So we would play with a hammered dulcimer that was tuned to a raga that I could play in. Certainly if a percussionist was available we would involve some kind of rhythmic accompaniment. Not set to a particular tala, as there were at that point no percussionists in Louisville that I knew of that knew anything of tala. I brought back with me a tambura and a sitar, which I had bought in a music store. So we would use the tambura, sometimes in alternate, extended technique—we would use sticks to play it, or a slide, or bow it, we would do something unusual with it, as improvisers. And a ghatam, and a mridangam that my instrument-maker friend had made for me. I met him my last month there, and didn’t actually study with him, but did commission a drum from him. He gave me a few tips and pointers. That was really the extent of the musical possibilities without a teacher.

The limits of his situation lead Acker to Wesleyan University, where he could continue his study West African music and South Indian music under master musicians of those systems; his interest in Javanese Gamelan developed after his arrival at Wesleyan’s graduate program in World Music. It had been difficult to continue to learn South Indian music in Kentucky, and his usual primary school audiences showed little interest in hosting his India program:
Gregory: I was interested in a deeper understanding of the music. I tried getting some more information from printed sources, but there really wasn’t much that helped, that I could find at Ashwin Batish’s store, the Ali Akbar Khan store—they didn’t really have anything that dealt with learning South Indian music on your own that was decent. I got the “Learn to play This, Learn to Play That” books.

Joseph: Those are terrible!

Gregory: They were really funny! [laughs] I made some inquiries about where would be the nearest place to learn. There was a musician in Cincinnati who played tabla, but I really wasn’t that interested in learning tabla. I didn’t locate any other opportunities. So, my interest in the music was there. The other thing that happened that drove me into my studies here, was a series of things.

The program that I offer for schools and community groups about my experiences in Kerala—the program is called House of Friends, which is the translation of Mitraniketan—were not very popular. I didn’t do a whole lot of marketing, but unlike the performances and workshops that I gave about Morocco and about Togo, these performances just did not seem to interest people. . . . It was almost invariably, West Africa. That has a very complicated background, about what people are interested in and why, and what they are trying to accomplish by their cultural program in schools. But India, there just was not a significant Indian population—there are a few—but the whole concept of India was just not of interest. Whereas, people thought about Africa and they thought about their African-American students; that would certainly appeal. . . .

I thought that maybe I would do better if I had more information and more knowledge, I could teach at a more in-depth level, that might be appropriate for higher education.
Acker’s two primary uses of South Indian music—for an educational show and for improvisation—seem to be very different in intention, method, and results. Asking if he found any sense of an internal conflict or ethical dilemma due to this varied activity, he responded that an honest approach to his audiences and to the music allows him to comfortably recontextualize South Indian music:

Joseph: Is there any conflict between wanting to present a cultural show where you explain something, and this improvisation where you just jam on the instrument and it sounds good? One is putting it in context, the other is decontextualizing it. Is it O.K. to do both?

Gregory: Well, that’s an impossible question to answer. It’s O.K. for some people, and other people don’t think it’s O.K. I’ll tell you, my first answer is, Yes, it is O.K. As long as you are honest about what you are doing. If you play the South Indian bamboo flute and you tell people that it is South Indian music, and you play some bizarre improvisation, that’s not related to any raga and so on, then I think you’re doing the wrong thing. But as long as you say, “this is the South Indian bamboo flute but the music I’m playing is improvised,” or, “I’m playing an improvisation
based on the following raga,” or, “I’m playing in the following tala,” you can make those connections if you want to for people, and for yourself. I think that is a great way to learn and to play.

It is also a pragmatic solution, for playing with musicians who don’t have the benefit of either study in India or study with Indian teachers here, or study with American teachers who are well-versed in Indian music. It is a pretty small Indian music playing community; my goal is to play the most music. I want to connect with people in as many ways as possible. Improvisation is a great way to do that. If you want to bring in certain elements of the culture, or certain musical elements, I think there’s nothing wrong with that. I can teach my friends about drones; I can teach them about tala. I can teach them about the notes of a particular raga. I’ve done all that, and that makes the music go in that direction.

Instrument Building for Traditional and Fusion Music

For Acker, the act of building his instruments has been a key component in his process of making South Indian music more his own. Instrument building is a process that requires intensive thought, study, listening, judgment, respect, and craftwork. It is a process that brings him close to the heart of the music:

Gregory: My feelings about the “O.K.-ness” of cross-cultural fusion have been assuaged somewhat through the process of making my own instruments. If I make an instrument that is modeled after an instrument from another culture, and I acknowledge the inspiration, but make certain modifications in the instruments, I feel a sense of ownership of that instrument. If I own that instrument, I can do whatever I want with it. There is no music for the double mbiras that I make, it doesn’t exist. So whatever music I make for it is “the music” for it. Whatever music anyone else makes for it is the music for it too. But, I don’t have a long history for those instruments, there’s nothing to compare to. That has been liberating for me. It has made me feel
O.K. in my boots about what I am doing. In a sense, to me it is paying the dues. It is paying the dues of using some elements of the musical style.

This is just an internal connection for me, it is totally cerebral. . . . My feeling is, if I’ve made these instruments, then I can have some say in the way that they are played. It is without doubt that the instruments will not be exact replicas, I’m not trying for that. In fact, generally I try for something that is more accessible for people here. . . . I’m far more interested in providing more hands-on experiences for more people.

Although he builds instruments from a variety of cultural origins for himself and others (including the flutes Viswanathan uses in his classes), I wondered how his own sense of personal musical identity might be different from, yet linked to, musical components from foreign cultures. I asked what “his music” was, to determine how Acker had internalized Karnatak music:

**Joseph:** Do you feel like there’s something that’s “your music”? Your musical culture or your voice, that’s been shaped by this and that, but always comes out no matter what you’re doing?

**Gregory:** I think that the true music of a person is not the instruments that they play, or the notes that they play on them, or any of that. I think it has to do with the way that person interacts with the world. In particular with other musicians in this case, but also with the inspirations of nature, and experience. And how those things get translated into the way that you make music. So for me it is much more about process rather than about a specific product.

My music, as I look at it in the most broad sense, has to do with my understanding of wanting to be involved with music from the ground floor up. I want to be hands-on from beginning to end, to make things that make music. I want to make music with people, not always with preconceived designs or written music. I want to make music with birds! I want to be that open, to the
music of the world, which is the people in it, the material and non-material aspects of the world. That’s my music.

On a more concrete level, I’ve been open, and I’ve experienced life and music in these different places that I have been. Here in the middle of Connecticut, I have really had some wonderful Javanese experiences, great African experiences, great South Indian experiences. So, all of that is in the hopper, and I guess that I have gone with my strengths in certain areas: I’ve been the flute builder for Viswa; I’ve gone with my weaknesses too: I’ve tried to learn the piece just like he wants it! To play “the notes” just like they’re supposed to be, and to play them the same way every time. In Gamelan music, Ghanaian music, too. Those are classical musics of their places, and the role of improvisation is way, way, way up [in the learning process]. . . . [It’s] not entry level stuff.

Acker noted that he was frustrated with certain pedagogical approaches that favored the teacher’s needs rather than the students. For example, improvisation in all of the music genres we discussed is introduced only

Fig. 7-11. Gregory Acker (drumming at right) and children from Spencer Elementary School, performing with the Gamelan and shadow puppets he constructed. “Daedalus and Draupadi,” World Music Hall, Wesleyan University. April 29, 1998.
after years of work; Acker feels it would be much better for the student’s
development to begin immediately with improvisation. Ultimately, “his
music” contains aspects of all music he has studied—Javanese, Ghanaian,
Karnatak, Jazz—but is more accurately defined by the processes of
involvement with music, instruments, and people that he fosters through
his teaching, performance, and building.

My Tape Compositions

INDIA and NEPAL are tape pieces that represent aspects of my own
experiences in South Asia (listen to CD Tracks 4 and 5). They were realized
with the intention of creating a musical experience that would provide a
listener with an educational and aesthetically intriguing aural portrait of a
place and people. I also hoped to challenge the conventions of usage of
ethnomusicological field recordings, in that I consciously recontextualized
the musical performances I had recorded. In 1994-1995, I recorded music
and sounds throughout India and Nepal, while living there to study
Karnatak singing. In many of these recordings I focused on music,
especially folk expressions unavailable in library recording collections or
unheard in concert programs, such as call-and-response religious
chanting, women’s festival songs, processional drumming, brass bands,
and bhajan singing. I both commissioned recordings from artists and
recorded the music I overheard in public places. Meanwhile I also
recorded environmental sounds: from hotel roofs, vendor’s cries, at train stations, taxi rides, and machines.

These tape pieces, realized in the studios of Wesleyan, are creative works that express my interpretation of relationships between humans and technology in South Asia. As part of the representation of these relationships, I included recordings of people using transportation devices, tape recordings of popular music, and public address amplification systems. I also intend for sound elements to reveal information about history, culture, and human activity. My original notes from 1996 for the pieces state:

The theme of movement is intentional and important in the transportation sound sections; one hears traffic swirling around—the loud noises of a busy street in urban India. This flows into amplified religious music, often with distorted, overdriven equipment. The temple sequence builds up to a frenzy, then all is washed away by the relentless sea. Women at work and at religious festivals follow, presenting a contrast to the men. The drums move us from the women’s private realm to the public world of men. Sellers and transportation end and frame the piece. One hears an exuberant brass band going by, and finally a plaintive fiddle-seller closes the piece.

This piece conveys several sets of contrasting elements, which in their original social context can be in conflict. Men and women, urban and rural, pastoral and technological, Muslim and Hindu, North and South India, high and low caste, religious and commercial: all of these things are represented, juxtaposed, and layered in this piece.

Similar to the way we look at visual art, this tape composition can be analyzed from either a detailed or generalized viewpoint. Thus I hope the listener will hear an overall structure that strives to be musical and coherent, based on the sources available.
Simultaneously one can examine the details and layers of sound present, as each sonic event corresponds to specific social, historical, and material phenomenon.

Sources for the composition:

I. Opening, streets and traffic
   Lucknow cycle riksha ride; Vendors’ cries from Madras
II. Voices and loudspeakers
   Muslim Call to Prayer: Madurai bazaar, Madras hotel verandah;
   Hindu bhajans, mostly men’s voices: Durga Puja, Khajuraho; Krishna bhajan, Vrindaban; call and response, Minakshi Temple, Madurai
III. Bells
   Hindu temples in Madurai, Lucknow, and Puri
IV. (Unamplified) voices
   Interlude: Surf at Puri
   Rice Harvest, Bodh Gaya; Chat Puja, women’s songs, Bodh Gaya
V. Drumming
   Laxmi Puja, Bodh Gaya; Distant drums, Vedantangal
VI. Sellers’ cries, Procession
   “45” clothes sellers, Delhi; “Pepsi” and bus, Ramnagar; Train and “coffee”, Bangalore; Filmi music, Kodaikanal; Brass bands, Agra;
   Viol and auto horns, Delhi

I included several recordings from South India in the compositions: chants at an important Hindu temple and pilgrimage center, the Minakshi Temple of Madurai, Tamil Nadu; loudspeakers with tape recordings of filmi music [as Indian cinema music is known] heard on the street; the Call to Prayer of Masjids in Madras and Mysore; folk drums in rural Tamil Nadu; and classical nagaswaram-tavil music from a Hindu temple. But I specifically excluded commissioned recordings I had made of Karnataka artists in Madras and elsewhere, to give coherence and to intentionally impart feelings of distance and anonymity to the piece. Reflection on the
compositional process led to insights about the nature of sounds, sound objects, tape recordings, and presentation of sounds; via a technological medium I am able to present environmental and musical sounds in a new context—your headphones. As emotionally charged sensations that occur over time yet lack substance, sounds are both elusive and powerful.

Fig. 7-12. Self portrait, collection of ambient sounds by the Ganga. Assi Ghat, Varanasi. November, 1996.
## Conclusions

The artists who create Karnatak fusion music each bring their own priorities and goals to the music. Some musicians use Indian instruments, while others use instruments from their own or another culture. These instruments may be played in a traditional style, or in a new way. The performance event may recall aspects of traditional performance, or may be more like that of other genres. The artists themselves may or may not be identified as South Indians. Mapping the continuums of possibilities in Karnatak fusion music shows that many types of fusion are potentially available:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indian musical instruments</th>
<th>Non-Indian musical instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian musical materials</td>
<td>Non-Indian musical materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian languages for texts</td>
<td>Non-Indian languages for texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian contexts and settings</td>
<td>Non-Indian contexts and settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian musical aesthetics</td>
<td>Non-Indian musical aesthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performers with Indian identity</td>
<td>Performers with non-Indian identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 7-13. Continuums of possible Karnatak fusion types. For any single criteria, points may be located anywhere along the line.

Within a single musical event, such as a recording, concert, or composition, multiple points along these lines can be found. For example,
in the case of Royal Hartigan’s work, he uses both Indian and non-Indian musical techniques and has collaborated with his teacher, Ranganathan, in composing a work. This chart should help the reader to reflect on the components, both musical and cultural, that are constituents of a fusion performance. The chart suggests what factors are involved in creating, performing, and listening to Karnatak fusion music.

The transnational quality of fusion music is important for understanding how and why a performance exists as it does. Karnatak fusion music arises from cultural and musical interactions and exchanges of ideas. This may happen directly between artists, may be the result of a teacher-student relationship, or may come about because of the influence of audio recordings. When this intercultural interaction occurs, it has been noted that care must be taken to achieve an ethical artistic statement. Gregory Acker and Royal Hartigan address the need for honesty in the artist’s approach to music of another culture; in order for a cross-cultural dialogue to be ethical and respectful, artists must not pretend that their music is traditional if indeed it is not. That music and people are capable of crossing cultural and national boundaries precipitates today’s situation in which artists can create new musical forms, based upon components such as Karnatak music.
Conclusions

Cherish, Conserve, Consider, Create
—Lou Harrison

If I were to attempt a distillation of this whole thesis down to merely one sentence, it might be this: Karnatak music in the United States is approached by each participant in their own unique way. Like others, my own way recalls Lou Harrison’s dictum.¹ An approach is a way of defining and doing; each participant is every listener, audience member, musician, program organizer, and teacher; and the unique way is based upon a person’s own sense of needs, identities, and artistic expressions. Any reduction of the thoughts, actions, or music of a group of people to simple summations is fraught with exceptions and contradictions, making such generalizations difficult and best avoided. It can be argued that all aspects of any culture everywhere are created, negotiated, adapted, and transformed by particular people. Given this view, Karnatak music in the U.S.

¹ Quoted in Henry Kaiser and David Lindley, The Sweet Sunny North (Shanachie 64057, 1994), notes, 27.
exists in the way it does because of the efforts of individual musicians and music lovers.

This thesis has presented selected cases of Karnatak music in the United States. I have described musicians, teachers, listeners, students, and organizers who are personally known to me from my own study and performance of this music, and I have also drawn on the rich literature produced by scholars and the Indian-American community. In the following, I will briefly summarize the findings of my research by noting the themes of each chapter and recalling just a few of the many names of people, groups, and places I have mentioned. Then I will discuss avenues for future research that have been revealed in writing this thesis. I close with some speculations on future directions that Karnatak music may take in the U.S.

**Summary**

Karnatak music in the United States is framed by the sets of issues religion and tradition, migration and diaspora, and music education. The participants themselves in this music refer to these issues in many different ways: some people may worship through singing Karnatak compositions, though one person may give the music’s devotional content much more importance than another; some learn of their family’s cultural heritage through music; some may find a place in a diasporic community through it, while others take the music outside of
groups of Indian-Americans; and the problem of how to go about learning the music is solved in many different ways. These issues are of critical importance to reaching an understanding of Karnatak music in the U.S.

The first Karnatak performers who came to America had a keen interest in playing and teaching their music outside of India. Early South Indian musicians in the United States, such as T. Viswanathan and Balakrishnan, largely found their audience and pupils among non-Indian Americans, notably in university programs that began to teach Indian music. University students had the new and unique opportunity to directly experience and perform a musical system other than that with which they had been raised. Comparatively few Indians resided in the U.S. when these first musicians arrived in the 1950s.

However, soon thereafter important changes in U.S. immigration laws facilitated the migration of tens of thousands of people from South India. Consequently, after 1965, Karnatak music finds a home in the holidays, festivals, and concerts conducted by groups of immigrants from South India. In settings such as a Kasturi Kannada Association function or the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana, Karnatak music is largely an expression of the participants’ own culture, and stems from their passion for this art.

Hindu temples in the United States provide a special home for Karnatak music. For some of the immigrants who built these institutions, such as in
Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Middletown, religion has become a critically important component in their sense of group and individual identities. Much of Karnatak music was written in praise of God by people regarded as saints. Thus this music is frequently found in America on a temple’s calendar of events and festivals.

Teachers of Karnatak music are responsible for the transmission of facets of culture to first- and second-generation Indian-Americans, and non-Indian Americans. In some ways their methodology is suited to their local environment and accommodates students’ American lifestyles; nonetheless the same principles of music are taught in America as in India. Thus music students’ “get-togethers” are regularly held to unite people who may be otherwise scattered around an urban center. They share their musical efforts and re-create aspects of their place of origin, with the leadership of people such as Shakuntala Murthy and Kala Prasad.

For second-generation Indian-Americans and non-Indian Americans, Karnatak music can play a different role in their lives than it often does for immigrants. Having grown up in America, Karnatak music can represent an important link to India—or it may be regarded as a system of music one can learn purely for self-improvement and enjoyment. It may be the entry point for a lifetime of studies about many aspects of South Asia—or it may be an artistic expression of one’s experiences and perspectives that transcends cultural, racial, and geographic boundaries.
Finally, even though Karnatak music is traditionally thought of as a pure, whole art, in which nothing must be added and certain elements cannot be taken away, many musicians in the U.S., India, and elsewhere utilize aspects of Karnatak music in other forms of music. In some of these cases of fusion employing Karnatak music, such as the work of Royal Hartigan and Gregory Acker, the artist expresses a special consideration for the ethical issues raised when musical ideas are cross-culturally recontextualized.

**Directions for Future Research**

This work was conceived in part with the hope of adding to the literature on Indian diasporic music-making, a small yet significant and growing body of research. Much has been excluded from this work, due to lack of time and space. For example, the present thriving Karnatak music scenes of Californian coastal urban centers have been largely overlooked. Some points I raise could be amplified into larger studies, such as the history of recordings of Indian music released in the U.S.

Karnatak music is now a transnational phenomenon, and could provide material for many interesting studies on the international transmission of culture. Only in recent decades has Karnatak music been brought to America by musicians from South India. More of their stories, motivations, performance techniques, and teaching methodologies need to be looked at to learn about
Indian music and musicians outside of India. Further studies could focus on the visiting artists from India who perform in the U.S., examining their motivations for touring abroad, impressions of America, and any issues that may arise about their performances.

At present, many among the Indian-American communities are producing an increasing number of concerts and music festivals, for which a comprehensive survey of people, groups, and events should be conducted. The activities of the second generation, and their own descendants, should be of ongoing interest as these groups mature and become more active leaders in Karnatak music performance, study, and support. Their maintenance of first-generation immigrants’ organizations, such as temples and festivals, and their continued links to India, including return visits, and tours by Indian musicians, may change over time and be of great interest in the future.

The internet has become an abundant source of information on Karnatak music around the world: it includes active discussion groups, concert advertisements and reviews, educational materials from the beginning level on up, and pages of artists, teachers, and institutions. Though web pages and e-mail have served me as valuable resources on happenings and as a convenient mode of communication, I have chosen not to analyze the internet here precisely because of the large quantity of information it holds. A future study could make
an insightful inventory of the internet’s role in Indian diasporic music and culture.

In some places I mention Bharata Natyam dance because it is a closely related, though obviously quite separate, performing art form of South India that has also been brought to America. Little research has been done on this topic, nor has much been written on other Indian arts abroad.

The question of Karnatak music’s meaning has justifiably often occupied my pages, because its meaning in the U.S. differs from that of the Indian context, yet is also referential to India. Thus a contrasting approach for a study could be to look at just the music itself, insofar as this is possible, to see how the performing tradition may be changed or retained as it appears in the new American context. While I have focused on issues such as organizations and teachers, it would be interesting to find out in more detail if, for example, alapana is performed differently by students trained in the U.S., if U.S. audiences favor certain raga and compositions, or what innovations in performance will arise in the U.S.

The Future of Karnatak Music in the United States

To end this work, I wish to offer some thoughts on the future direction of Karnatak music in America, based upon what I heard from my informants, teachers, and associates in the course of this research. Some feel that the efforts of scholars, musicians, and community-based organizers must not exist in isolation
from one another. A dialogue of ideas and perspectives enriches our musical and social lives, so that all interested parties may benefit from each other’s work. This could take place in many forms, such as festivals, workshops, conferences, jointly-sponsored teachers and concerts, publications, and fusion music.

Many have expressed to me the hope that more Americans (of all ethnicities) may come to hear and enjoy Karnatak music’s exquisite poetry, beautiful melodies, exciting rhythms, and virtuoso musicianship. So often it was said that our modern lives leave little time and energy for the necessary years of devoted efforts in studying Karnatak music. I sense from this that Karnatak music must itself be an antidote to the unfocused yet hurried lives of contemporary Americans and Indians: to sit and sing a raga certainly calms the mind and body.

Of critical importance to the survival and propagation of Karnatak music is ongoing oral transmission of musical knowledge; students need continued contact with visiting and resident teachers. New directions mentioned to me involved new media-based teaching resources, more opportunities for student performances, and additional classroom and summer-camp music education for youths. In some ways, the situation is improving: students in America today have more opportunities than ever before to hear performances of Karnatak music by leading artists from India. While some hope that more people will learn
Karnatak music, others feel that the potential for expansion of Karnatak music education is constrained by the necessity of diligent practice. Some musicians expressed that this music’s expert performances may actually be best suited for intimate audiences of connoisseurs.

The deepest conflict I have felt in my research is the pull between the view that Karnatak music is an expression of Indian culture, that it must be learned with a knowledge of and participation in Indian contexts; and the seemingly opposite position that Karnatak music transcends its roots and has a universal appeal. In the end, I believe Karnatak music in America and elsewhere does not make complete sense without an understanding of the culture from which it comes, but that at its best, it sublimely expresses the highest goals of all humanity.
Glossary

Unless specified, musical terms refer to Karnatak music, and religious terms refer to Hinduism. Diacritical markings for transliterations from Indian languages to Roman script have not been used in this thesis.

*abhinaya* in Bharata Natyam, narrative, mimetic dance that conveys a story or emotions, via textual interpretation

*abhishekan* anointing of a *murti*, or iconic image of a god or goddess

*adavu* in Bharata Natyam, dance movement sequence

*adi tala* most common time cycle, 4+2+2 beats

*akasha* sky

*akshara* a single beat; pulse over time

*alankara* solfege exercise

*alapana* free-rhythm improvisation without text

*alarippu* Bharata Natyam form, utilizes only ‘pure,’ abstract rhythmic dance movements; first item in a recital

*anupallavi* second section of a *kriti* form

*aradhana* worship service, in Karnatak music for a deceased saint-singer-composer

*arohana* ascending abstracted scale

*avarohana* descending abstracted scale

*bhajan* religious song; congregational devotional singing

*bhakti* spiritual devotion

*bhakti marg* the path of devotion to the goal of liberation

*Bharata Natyam* South Indian classical dance form, especially important in Tamil Nadu state

*bhava* emotion

*brahmapadesam* receiving of sacred thread by a higher-caste boy

*caranam* third section of *kriti* song form

*chela* student (North Indian term)

*chenda* drum for Kathakali dance genre of Kerala
chitra vina  slide vina

dholak   double-headed barrel drum

dhoti    male dress, skirt-like wrap

divyanamavali  simpler songs of Tyagaraja’s repertoire, text includes repetition of the names of God

donno   West African tension drum

edipu    starting place of the melody within a time cycle

filmī    Indian cinema music

gamaka   note shape or movement; e.g., slide, stress, shake

ghatam   clay pot percussion instrument

ghazal  North Indian genre of music, with Urdu poetry

gitam    simple song

guru     guide, teacher, master, authority, and/or respected leader

gurukulam  domestic setting of teacher and students living together

harmonium  small bellows organ

janta    stress on a repeated note; a variety of gamaka

jaru     slide between notes; a variety of gamaka

jathi     groups of notes

jati     narrow caste division (broader grouping is by varna)

jatiswaram  Bharata Natyam piece, utilizes only nṛtta; performed near the beginning of a recital

jugalbandi  performance with two soloists, at times a combined Hindustani–Karnatak duo recital

kala     speed; density of notes per beats

kampita  oscillation, shake; a variety of gamaka

kanjira  frame drum

karvai   silence, rest

kathakalakshepam  singing and story-telling

Kathakali  dance genre of Kerala

khanda capu  fast five beat tala

khyal    Hindustani vocal music; ‘imagination’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kolu</td>
<td>dolls of clay or wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>konakhol</td>
<td>vocal recitation of rhythmic syllables</td>
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<tr>
<td>kriti</td>
<td>common three-part song form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kriya</td>
<td>counting tala with fingers and hands</td>
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<tr>
<td>kshetra</td>
<td>sacred place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laya</td>
<td>rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lingam</td>
<td>symbol of Siva; round-top stone cylinder</td>
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<tr>
<td>mandap</td>
<td>temple hall, or marriage hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mangal arathi</td>
<td>religious ritual, offering</td>
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<tr>
<td>mantra</td>
<td>chant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masjid</td>
<td>building for Muslim congregational worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mbira</td>
<td>so-called ‘thumb piano’ of Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moksha</td>
<td>liberation from the cycles of existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mora</td>
<td>rhythmic cadence consisting of three repeated phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mrudangam</td>
<td>double-headed barrel drum, principal percussive accompaniment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mudra</td>
<td>in Karnatak music, composer’s signature found near the end of a song text; in Bharata Natyam, hand positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murti</td>
<td>iconic image of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nagaswaram</td>
<td>double reed aerophone, accompanied by the tavil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nattuvanar</td>
<td>dance-master in Bharata Natyam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nattuvangam</td>
<td>vocalisations and cymbal playing of the dance-master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niraval</td>
<td>melodic elaboration of a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nritta</td>
<td>in Bharata Natyam, ‘pure’ dance of abstract movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>padam</td>
<td>Bharata Natyam pieces that emphasize abhinaya, mimetic narrative dance, performed after the varnam and before the tillana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>pakhawaj</td>
<td>North Indian double-headed barrel drum, used for the Dhrupad genre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pallavi</td>
<td>first section of a kriti; or, a complex form of improvisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parampara</td>
<td>lineage of transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prasad</td>
<td>food blessed by the deity and distributed for consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puja</td>
<td>worship ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rajopachara</td>
<td>transference of royal role and service to royalty to God, including to a murti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raga</td>
<td>mode, with particular ascending and descending scales, melodic fragments, intonation, and gamakas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rasika</td>
<td>educated listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>riksha</td>
<td>motorized or pedaled three-wheel transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rishi</td>
<td>teacher, sage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rupaka</td>
<td>three-beat tala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sadbam</td>
<td>Bharata Natyam form, utilizes only ‘pure,’ abstract rhythmic dance movements; early in recital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sabha</td>
<td>music and dance society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sadhana</td>
<td>spiritual practice and devotion; another term for Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sahityya</td>
<td>song text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samadhi</td>
<td>cremation site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samam</td>
<td>the first beat of a time cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sankirna rupaka tala</td>
<td>2+9 beats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>santur</td>
<td>Kashmiri hammered dulcimer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sargam</td>
<td>solfege notation, abbreviated ‘s r g m p d n s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sari</td>
<td>women’s dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sarod</td>
<td>North Indian unfretted plucked lute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shishya</td>
<td>disciple, student, or devotee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sitar</td>
<td>North Indian fretted plucked lute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solkattu</td>
<td>rhythmic syllabization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sruti</td>
<td>mircotonal intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sruti box</td>
<td>electronic drone instrument, imitates tambura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swami</td>
<td>spiritual guide, teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swara</td>
<td>note; solfège notes ‘sa ri ga ma pa da ni sa’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swaramandalam</td>
<td>North Indian plucked, unstoped string instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swaravali varisa</td>
<td>basic solfège exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swara kalpana</td>
<td>elaboration using solfège syllables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabla</td>
<td>North Indian, pair of drums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tala</td>
<td>cycle of beats; meter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tambura</td>
<td>drone, lute with four unstoped strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanam</td>
<td>unmetered pulsed rhythmic improvisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tani avartanam</td>
<td>percussion solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanpura</td>
<td>North Indian tambura, may have four to six strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tarana</td>
<td>North Indian dance form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tavil</td>
<td>barrel drum, accompanies nagaswaram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thathakara</td>
<td>percussive syllables, such as ‘ta ka di mi’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thumri</td>
<td>North Indian light classical genre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tillana</td>
<td>in Bharata Natyam, a pure dance piece; in Karnatak music, a piece derived from the dance piece; for both, uses drum syllables as text, and is performed at or near the end of a recital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varna</td>
<td>broad caste grouping (subdivided by jati)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varnam</td>
<td>in Karnatak music, the first piece of a concert; in Bharata Natyam, a long, complex piece in the middle of the recital, includes pure and narrative dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vidwan</td>
<td>learned musician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vina</td>
<td>plucked string instrument with frets, wooden body, and gourd resonator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yoga</td>
<td>practice of breathing and performing postures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Music Academy. Journal of the Music Academy, Madras. (1930–).


Discography


Shankar, L. Who’s to Know. ECM 1-1195, 1981.


Subbulakshmi, M. S. *The Sounds of Subbulakshmi*. World Pacific Records WP-1440, [1965].


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