



**Prakriti  
Foundation**

**The Festival of Sacred Music, Thiruvaiyaru  
(2015)**

## **About FOSM 2015**

The Festival of Sacred Music (FOSM), a 3-day festival that takes place in Thiruvaiyaru celebrating the cultural importance of this holy ground, aims to restore the pride of the Music Centre that existed in the town at the time of Saint Thyagaraja. The festival intends to showcase true and pure forms of music, with the goal of bringing something new to the local art and music landscape of Thiruvaiyaru. It features stand-out performances by artists who are the true torchbearers of their respective fields, carrying forward the tradition of music.

We at the Prakriti Foundation started the festival as a community initiative to acquaint the people of the Thanjavur district to exceptional performances and new worlds of music, and that too gratis. As with all Prakriti Foundation projects, the Festival of Sacred Music is founded on visionary principles - the idea behind conducting the festival at Thiruvaiyaru is not only to popularise music forms, but also to make the world aware of the rich heritage and tradition of the town, thereby encouraging heritage preservation and rural tourism. We work in close collaboration with Dr Rama Kausalya's Marabu Foundation and Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).

The festival opens its doors to people all over the country and the world, inviting them to experience the art, culture and glorious heritage of the special place, Thiruvaiyaru and become etched in its fascinating history. The best part being that it is non-ticketed and is open to all!

The 2015 edition of the festival featured a unique blend of artists from all across India and the world – from Temple Rock by Krishna's Temple Rock Band to Ethnotronic beats by Filter Coffee to soul-stirring classical folk music by the Manganiyars of Rajasthan to Kalakimamani Padmashri Dr. Kadri Gopalnath's take on Carnatic music played on the saxophone – the performances were as enchanting as they are eclectic.

## **Schedule**

### ***Concert by Krishna's Temple Rock Band***

Synopsis: Carnatic, rock and jazz fusion performance by Krishna Kumar on vocals and kanjeera, J. Sowri Rajan on *thavil*, Matt Littlewood on saxophone, Aman Mahajan on keyboard, Vijii Cheyur on electric guitar, and Mishko M'ba on electric bass guitar.

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Husoor Palace (Diwan Wada)

### ***Concert by Filter Coffee Band featuring Mahesh Vinayakram***

Synopsis: Live performance by Swarupa Ananth on percussion – *tabla* and Shriram Sampath on flutes and electronica, providing a new look on Hindustani Classical music, combining traditional *tabla/ flute* and vocals with hypnotic electronic grooves and textured sounds. Mahesh Vinayakram and Jahnvi Shrimankar adds in vocals for this performance.

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Husoor Palace (Diwan Wada)

### ***Manganiyars from Rajasthan***

Synopsis: Classical folk music performance by a group of 45 *Manganiyars* from Rajasthan. The music performance was put together by the Jaipur Virasat Foundation.

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: Pushya Mahal Ghat

### ***Saxophone Recital by Kadri Gopalnath***

Synopsis: Performance by Kadri Gopalnath on the saxophone. One of the pioneers of performing Carnatic music on the Sax, Dr. Gopalnath with A. Kanyakumari on Violin, Shri Rajendra Nakod on Tabla and Trichy B. Harikumar on Mridangam.

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: Panchanatheeswara Temple Mandapam

### **Artiste Profile**

#### **▪ *Krishna's Temple Rock Band***

Rooted in the ancient temple songs of South India, and the classical Carnatic music form, Krishna's Temple-rock has developed its own unique blend of contemporary Indian music. Created by Krishna Kumar, the band is one of India's most progressive music

groups, fusing traditional south Indian melodies with Rock, Blues and Jazz elements. Highly skilled musicians from 3 different nations combined with Krishna's charisma makes Krishna's Temple-rock a very special band on the World Music scene. The band's vibrant synthesis of Carnatic and Western music has already captured legions of fans in India.

**Krishna Kumar** (Vocals, Kanjeera, Band leader) is heir to a long music and dance tradition. His voice, expressing the wide repertoire of Carnatic music, has been described as "divinely inspired". Krishna's earlier explorations of fusing Carnatic with Western popular music, inspired him to start Krishna's Temple-rock, which he calls "an experiment into the unity of music". Krishna is settled in Pondicherry, South India, where he runs a dance and music school.

**Matt Littlewood** (Saxophone) Originally from the U.K., Matt studied western classical music in Exeter, England. For the past 10 years he has been very active on the Indian jazz scene, and has performed with various groups at all major venues and festivals in India and abroad.

**Aman Mahajan** (Keyboard) A graduate of the Berklee College of Music (Boston), Mahajan is widely influenced by jazz, blues, electronic music and folk music from Africa, India and the American continents. He has worked with musicians from all over the world in a plethora of musical idioms.

**Vijji Cheyur** (Electric Guitar) A stage performer from the age of 11, Vijji combines in his playing his classical music training from the Trinity College of Music, with his experience of playing Rock, Pop and Jazz in various bands. He is very much in demand for his talent and originality.

**Sowri Rajan** (Thavil) is the son of famous *Thavil* Master S.Jayajendran. He has accompanied various artists in India and abroad, like L. Subramaniam, M.S. Gopalakrishnan, John Mc Laughlin, Trilok Gurtu and many more. Presently he is teaching south Indian drums at the Music College in Cuddalore.

**Misho M'ba** (Bass Guitar) is a versatile bass player and has worked with many renowned musicians and performed around the world. Settled today in Pondicherry, he is regularly performing and recording with different musicians all over India.

- ***Filter Coffee Band***

Filter Coffee is an Ethnotronic (Ethnic and Electronic) collaborative, brainchild of Flautist Shriram and Percussionist Swarupa, who organically combine virtuosic improvisation with electronic soundscapes and hypnotic grooves, brewing a signature sound that offers a new look at Classical/ Folk music through a modern electronic perspective. Having spent the most part of the last two years touring and playing music

festivals around the world the duo also successfully released their debut album 'Raagatronic', ranking number one on the iTunes India music charts.

**Shriram Sampath** is an Indian flautist, specialising in playing the Indian Classical *Bansuri* and has a penchant for experimenting with a variety of flutes from across the globe. Apart from being a sought-after session artiste for Films, Ad Jingles, Documentaries and TV Serials, Shriram's recent projects include collaborations/performances with the likes of Talvin Singh and the State of Bengal. One half of Filter Coffee, Shriram creates a unique texture of the flutes by using electronic pedals/processors for live performances and also handles other Loops/ Electronics on stage. As a Music producer, solidly influenced by multiple music genres, Shriram carves the electronic soundscape of Filter Coffee.

**Swarupa Ananth-Sawkar**, a disciple of Ustad Allarakha & Ustad Zakir Hussain, has been playing the *Tabla* for over 20 years and has been captivating audiences worldwide with her innovative *tabla* playing and terrific stage presence. As a percussionist, Swarupa plays the whole gamut of percussion instruments, from the Djembe & Darbuka to the Cajon and Timbale. She is known for her own signature & inventive style of blending beats with fiery *Tabla Bols & Konnakoll*. Swarupa has worked alongside Music Director Ram Sampath on his Coke Studio @ MTV episode; Devi, showcasing India's best female talent. Swarupa was featured as one of India's finest female Percussionists & *Tabla* players. She has performed with & in the presence of stalwarts like Oscar and Grammy award winner A.R. Rahman, Ustad Zakir Hussain, Ustad Fazal Qureshi, Taufiq Qureshi, Shankar Mahadevan, Ram Sampath, Sona Mohapatra, Kailash Kher, Hariharan, George Brooks & Salim-Sulaiman, to name a few.

**Mahesh Vinayakram**, son of ghatam legend Padmabhushan T.H.Vikku Vinayakram, is one of the leading artists in the field of Carnatic and world music today. He started his career as a solo vocalist at the age of 12. He is a senior disciple of Smt.Radha Viswanathan daughter of Bharath Ratna Smt.M.S. Subbulakshmi and continues the Semmangudi Parampara (bhani) in Carnatic music presentation. He also had the opportunity to learn from Gurus like Shri H.Y. Narayanan, Shri O.S. Thiagarajan, Smt. Savithiri Sathyamurthy, Shri. Bhagavathulu Seetharama Sarma (Kalapeetham, Chennai).

Having performed in all metro cities as a solo carnatic performer in major sabhas, he has also trained himself as a contemporary singer for various world class musicians like Ustad Zakir Hussain, Steve Smith, Sandeep Raval, Talvin Singh, to name a few. He is also part of Sapthaakshara, a family band led by his father Padma Shri. T.H. Vikku Vinayakram, having all his siblings and shishyas on stage. He is the recipient of many awards and has received accolades world over.

**Jahnvi Shrimankar**, a powerhouse performer, Jahnvi started singing at the age of 7 and has trained under legends like Smt. Kaumudi Munshi and Shri. Purshottam Upadhyay. Jahnvi brings in an exceptional blend of Indian Classical and Folk music through her

singing and has lent her voice for numerous Bollywood films, TV serials, ad jingles, theatre and radio plays. Having shared stage with Parthiv Gohil, Jahnvi has toured extensively all around the world, featuring in shows like 'Navras', 'Ishq Sufiyana', "Raag Rang", 'Raagas to Rock', prestigious Gujrati festivals like 'Kavya Samorah' and 'Gujarati Jalso'.

### ▪ ***Manganiyars from Rajasthan***

From obscure villages around Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Barmer in western Rajasthan, comes a musical tradition that has digested and belted out melodies from everywhere between Persia and the Punjab for several centuries. This is the music of The Manganiyars: a community of Muslim court musicians whose royal patrons may have disappeared because of circumstances of history, but whose music lives because its practitioners cannot live without it. These splendid virtuoso musicians combine the popular mystical and secular traditions of the desert, with those of the courts of the maharajas. They perpetuate a religious and chivalrous art dating from the Middle Ages.

The Manganiyars, as the roots of the name suggests, asked for alms in lieu of entertainment, performing at marriages, deaths and births – something they continue doing today. They converted to Islam some 400 years ago, an event that only enriched the already entrenched folk tradition of Rajasthan and Sindh with the import of words and tunes and instruments (like the *Kamancha*, a three-stringed ancestor of the violin, which has a bowl-shaped resonating chamber covered by goat skin) from as far away as Azerbaijan. Other commonly used instruments include *Khartaal*, a kind of castanet made of teak and *Dholak*, a hand drum with a simple membrane and handle.

Their music is complex and secular, its roots spread wide, though chiefly in Hindustani classical music. But its delivery isn't bound by the set rules of this tradition. The Manganiyar splits notes into improbable fractions, keeps beat with his eyes, shifts tempo as suddenly and effortlessly as a gust of desert wind moves a dune. The musical performances of the Manganiyars, ranging from traditional village settings to the biggest stages of the world, are in high demand not only because of their unique voices and instruments but also because they move the audiences, invoking the greatest, deepest joy to tears of happiness.

### ▪ ***Dr. Kadri Gopalnath***

Born on 6th December, 1948 in a humble family in Panemangalore, Karnataka, Kadri Gopalnath found himself exposed to music at a fairly early age, being the son of Smt. Gangamma and Sri. Thaniyappa, who was a Nadhaswaram Vidwan himself. Under the tutelage and guidance of gurus like Gopalkrishna Iyer, T. V. Gopalkrishnan and Sir Balakrishna Pillai, Gopalnath journeyed the path from learning the basics, to understanding composers of Carnatic music and *Kritis* and *Raagas*, to eventually creating music of his own. In early 1980, he performed at the Jazz Festival

in Mumbai with John Handy, a popular Jazz Musician from California, USA. Gopalnath then pursued the fusion of Jazz and Carnatic, music much to his audience's delight across Jazz Festivals in Prague, Berlin, Music Halle Festival in Paris, BBC Promenade Concert in London and so on.

Being among the topmost classical and fusion artists in the country, he can be ranked along with Pandit Ravi Shankar for popularizing the Indian Music in other parts of the world. He is ranked as "A TOP" grade artist by All India Radio (AIR) and has successfully dabbled in regional film music as well.

Over the 65 years that Gopalnath has flourished as an artist and evolved into an unquestionable maestro, he has received several honours and titles such as Asthana Vidwan of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam and the Shringeri Sharada Peetam, the Kendriya Sangeeth Natak Academy Award, *Kalaimamani* from Tamilnadu Government, Karnataka State Rajyotsava Award, Chowdiah Memorial Award, Purandara Award, Puttaraju Gawali Award, a Doctorate from the University of Bangalore and to top it all, the *Padma Shri* from the former president of India Sri. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam in the year 2004.

## **Press**

The Hindu, Magazine, Chennai, 25 April, 2015

<http://www.thehindu.com/features/magazine/beside-the-quiet-cauvery/article7137589.ece>

Outlook Traveller, 5 October, 2015

<https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/destinations/festival-of-sacred-music-in-thiruvaiyaru-tamil-nadu/>