



**Prakriti
Foundation**

**The Festival of Sacred Music, Thiruvaiyaru
(2016)**

About FOSM 2016

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 2016 edition of the festival showcased performances by a diverse genre of artists such as Dr. Mukundraj Maharaj, performing his soul inspiring bhajans and kirtans; Aditya Prakash Ensemble, the Los Angeles based music group, performing a fusion concert and a classical vocal concert by Nithyashree Mahadevan.

Schedule

Bhajans and Kirtans by Dr. Mukundraj Maharaj

Synopsis: Performance by Dr. Mukundraj Maharaj – a soul inspiring discourse on the Ramayan, the Bhagawad Geeta and other scriptures, expressed in the form of bhajans and kirtans.

Date: 26th February, 2016

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Husoor Palace (Diwan Wada)

Fusion concert by Aditya Prakash Ensemble

Synopsis: Performance by Aditya Prakash Ensemble, with Aditya Prakash on Vocals, Akshay Anantapadmanabhan on *Mridangam* & *Kanjira*, Aalaap Raju on Bass Guitar, Shreya Devnath on Violin, Vedanth Bharadwaj on Acoustic Guitar and MT Aditya Srinivasan on *Tabla* & Percussion.

Date: 27th February, 2017

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Pushya Mahal Ghat

Vocal Concert by Nithyashree Mahadevan

Synopsis: Performance by Nithyashree Mahadevan on vocals, singing popular Carnatic songs such as *Om Namō Narayana* and so on, with Shertalai R Ananthakrishnan on Mridangam, BV Raghavendra Rao on Violin and Alathur Rajaganesan on Kanjira.

Date: 28th February, 2017

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: Panchanatheeswara Temple Mandapam

Artiste Profile

▪ *Dr. Mukundraj Maharaj*

Dr. Mukundraj Maharaj is a spiritual leader and is the current *Mathadhikary* of Anandvan Sansthan at Songir, in Dhule District, Maharashtra. Anandvan is a spiritual centre with a lineage of four Gurus and Dr Maharaj is the fourth in line of this highly acclaimed spiritual Mahants. He holds an M Phil and PhD in Indian Spiritual studies, and is known for his deeply inspiring discourses on Shrimad Bhagwatam, Guru Geeta, Devi Bhagwatam, Bhagwad Geeta and the Tulsi Ramayan. He has a vast following across India, especially in the state of Maharashtra. His discourses have taken him around the world.

Dr Maharaj has a command over North Indian Classical music and his discourses are replete with devotional singing of *Abhangs* of the great saints of Maharashtra and are centred around the theme of deep devotion to Lord Vitthal Pandurang of Pandharpur. The Devotional music is extremely inspiring and elevates the listener to experience profound bhakti. He is accompanied by a team of extremely talented and proficient

classical singers and *tabla* players, who in their individual capacities are well-known in their circles.

▪ ***Aditya Prakash Ensemble***

The AP Ensemble, a Los Angeles based music group made up of some of the most exciting and dynamic jazz, hip hop and Indian classical musicians in the city, eager to share their love of these traditions, was founded by Indian classical vocalist, Aditya Prakash, in 2010. The young, imaginative group of musicians, who while bridging Western and Eastern approaches to performance, create a boldly innovative and powerful mix of the deep-rooted tradition of Indian classical ragas, chants and rhythms with the modern sounds of brass band arrangement, jazz harmony, and hip hop-infused rhythms. The Ensemble has created an outlet for the Indian classical and jazz aesthetic to shine forth in an accessible, modern, playful yet powerful and dynamic way.

Aditya Prakash, the creator of the AP Ensemble, is an award-winning, American-born Carnatic vocalist, known for his emotive and powerful voice. He has trained in Carnatic vocals under venerated Gurus - Sri P.S. Narayanaswami and Sri Palai Ramachandran - in India for 15 years. Aditya gained great exposure as one of the youngest musicians at the age of 16 to tour as lead vocalist with the Sitar Maestro Ravi Shankar, who took him to prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, Disney Hall and Hollywood Bowl, to name a few. He continues to perform in solo Carnatic vocal concerts as well as in group concerts, in collaboration with leading names of the industry.

Akshay Anantapadmanabhan is a reputed mridangam artiste, percussionist, collaborator and teacher. He is one of the leading young Carnatic mridangam artists based in Chennai. Known for his sensitive accompaniment, dynamic playing style and clarity coupled with energy, Akshay is quickly carving a space for himself amongst the top young mridangam artists of India. He has accompanied and toured with several legends and popular artists in the Carnatic music field such as Sri. R.K. Srikantan, Smt. Sudha Raghunathan, Sri. O.S. Thiagarajan, Sri. Unnikrishnan and Sri. Chitravina Ravikiran to name a few. Akshay has toured extensively through North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Aalaap Raju is a playback singer and a bass player from Chennai. Music came naturally to Aalaap as he hails from a musical family; his parents and grandparents are all well-known singers in the Malayalam music industry. As a singer and bass player, Aalaap has performed with several prominent artists such as Dr. T.V. Gopalakrishnan, Dr. L. Subramaniam, Frank Dubier, etc., and has recorded with noticeable composers such as Ilayaraja, Harris Jayaraj, Mani Sarma, G.V Prakash, Thaman, Deepak Dev and so on. He has more than 300 concerts to his credit.

Shreya Devnath is a student of the legendary Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman, currently under the guidance of Sri Lalgudi GJR Krishnan, and strives to be a worthy representative of this prestigious school of music. She has been actively performing within and outside India for the last seven years. She performs dual roles, mainly as a soloist, but also as an accompanist, performing alongside various other artistes and on collaborative instrumental duets. Over the years, she has received recognition in the form of awards and titles like the ‘*Yuva Kala Bharathi*’ conferred by Bharat Kalachar, ‘Yuva Shakthi Youth Achiever Award 2012’, ‘Best Upcoming Violinist’ by Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, ‘K S Mahadevan Endowment Award’ by Narada Gana Sabha, ‘Mumbai Nathan Endowment Award’ by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha and so on.

Vedanth Bharadwaj is a vocalist and composer born in Mumbai, India. He is a qualified guitarist from the Trinity College, London and is best known for his work with songs and poems from the Bhakti Movement. He started training in Classical music around the age of four, under Sri Neyveli Santhanagopalan. After graduation, Vedanth formed a band called ‘Buddha’s Babies’, playing in a genre they liked to call “alternative acoustic trance”. Soon after, he returned to Indian classical music and started training with Ramamoorthy Rao, who remains his guru to this day. Vedanth has a unique style that blends Indian Classical and folk music. He has given several performances and concerts all over India and abroad; a few notable ones have been at the Playhouse Company South Africa, Singapore, Ladakh Music Confluence 2010, TED Conference 2011, Congo Square Jazz Festival in Kolkata 2010, Chennai Sangamam 2012 and so on.

MT Aditya Srinivasan of Chennai, India, is one of the world’s premier young *tabla* players and is widely recognized as being an up and coming talent within his musical sphere. He was initiated into Carnatic music and western piano as a child and began to play the *Tabla* at the age of 4. Throughout his fruitful career, he has studied a variety of percussive disciplines under the tutelage of Shri Chandrajit, Shri Rajesh Dhavle, and Pt. Yogesh Samsi. Aditya has been awarded the CCRT government of India scholarship and has regularly performed with, and supported, leading artists such as Shri M. Balamuralikrishna, Sriram Parasuram, and Anooradha Sriram. Also, he has participated in numerous fusion projects, one of which, Zinx, was adjudged the winner of an all India band hunt organized by Oscar winner, A.R. Rahman.

▪ **Nithyashree Mahadevan**

An eminent Carnatic musician, Nithyashree Mahadevan hails from a prominent family of musicians. She has performed in all major *sabhas* in India and has presented her concerts in many destinations around the world. She has received multiple awards and honours, and has released more than 500 albums.

Nithyasree first learnt music from her mother, Lalitha Sivakumar. Like her mother, Nithyasree was also the disciple of her paternal grandmother D. K. Pattammal, and would accompany her in concert. Her father, an accomplished *mridangam* player and

disciple of his father-in-law Palghat Mani Iyer, constantly shows his support and accompanies her when she performs. Nithyasree's first public Carnatic performance was at the age of 14, in the presence of D.K. Pattamal, D. K. Jayaraman, and K. V. Narayanaswamy.

She is known for her thematic presentations which include patriotic songs, songs of the legendary Papanasam Sivan and songs of Gopalakrishna Bharathi, to name a few. She is also a noted playback singer in the South Indian Film industry and has recorded several successful songs for music directors such as AR Rahman and Vidyasagar.

Nithyasree was bestowed with numerous awards and titles over the years, a few of which include Kalaimamani by the Government of Tamil Nadu in 2000, Padma Sadhana, Isai Kalai Tharakai, Tamil Isai Thilakam and so on.

Press

The Hindu, Chennai, 18 March, 2016

<http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/society/culture-of-tamil-nadu-rediscovery-channel/article8370644.ece>

The Traveller, 16 September, 2016

<https://www.cntraveller.in/story/why-tanjore-should-be-next-on-your-list>

The Hindu, Chennai, 01 December, 2016

<http://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/The-art-of-reciprocation/article16736085.ece>