

The Program

**Monday, June 22, 2015
Unity Chapel, 7:30 pm**

Portal to India

**Nitya Pariti
(Veena)**

**Ms. Pariti will be accompanied by
Arun Ramachandran
(Mridangam)**

**Vanitha Suresh
(vocal)**

**Ms. Suresh will be accompanied by
Amit Rajesh
(clarinet)**

**Arun Ramachandran
(Mridangam)
and
Sanjay Suresh
(violin)**

**Meenakshi Ganesan
(Bharatanatyam)**

There will be a single short intermission.

**Portal to India is made possible in part by a grant from
Center for South Asia at the University of Wisconsin-Madison**



India in Music and Dance

From "The Jewel in the Crown" to "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" and "Slumdog Millionaire," the legendary Taj Mahal, Gandhi and the eternal Ganges, India has long captured the imagination of westerners.

India fairly bristles with a mind-stirring mix of landscape, glorious food and cultural traditions. The beating heart of India, however, is surely spiritual. It is the common thread that weaves its way through the vast and complex tapestry that is contemporary India, heard and seen in music and dance as much as in carved temples and ancient scriptures.

Travel writer, Sirina Singh, herself from India, has said, "The moment I start to think I'm right on the precipice of unravelling one of India's deep mysteries, she has an uncanny way of reminding me that it would take more than just a few lifetimes to do so." Indeed, given the country's long, colorful, and sometimes tumultuous history, demystifying India is a perpetual work-in-progress. And, perhaps, that is precisely what makes the country so deeply addictive.

Still, the panorama that is India and the India that stirs the soul are, for many of us, far, far away. Indian music is seldom heard, mystical to some ears and baffling in its rhythms. Indian dance is a form unto itself, rarely seen in the heartland of America.

Knowing that, the Rural Musicians Forum, with support from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for South Asia, scheduled this evening as an up-close-and-personal encounter with India - one that surely has the power to alter the way one views the world and one's place in it.

The

Meenakshi Ganesan. As director of the Kalaanjali Indian Dance Company, Guru Smt. Meenakshi Ganesan's mission is to promote the ancient South Indian classical dance form Bharatanatyam through systematic and formal training, outreach programs, workshops, seminars, lecture demonstrations, solo and group dance shows, collaborations and fund-raisers throughout Wisconsin and the Midwest.

Meenakshi had her formal training under Nrithya Shiromani, Guru Smt. Prema Nagasundaram, Nritya Shiksha Choodamani and Guru Smt. Padmini Radhakrishnan from Mumbai, India. Meenakshi started learning Bharatanatyam at the tender age of 6, and started her teacher's training at the age of 13. She has over 2000 performances to her credit and was conferred the prestigious title of Nritya Mayuri ("Dancing Peacock") by the Indian Ministry of Education. She has performed at prestigious events and venues, has obtained the highly acclaimed Vishaarad degree in Bharatanatyam and also has a solid foundation in the Natyashastras (Dance Theory) which is a standard part of the training students receive at Kalaanjali. She is currently pursuing her Masters degree in the same.

Meenakshi and the students of Kalaanjali frequently perform at various cultural and community events across North America. She currently trains more than 60 students in Bharatanatyam and has successfully conducted 12 Arangetrams (solo maiden recitals) with live orchestra. Meenakshi and the Kalaanjali dancers did their first India tour of performances this past year and participate in various festivals and dance competitions around the United States.

Nitya Pariti started learning the art of Carnatic vocal music and classical Veena (plucked string instrument) at a very young age with Guru Smt. Rajeswari Pariti, an accomplished Veena artist and artistic director of Rajaveena School of Music in Naperville, IL. Nitya is the fourth generation performer in this musical family.

Nitya has performed extensively in music festivals across the country including annual Veena conferences held in Chicago for the last few years. She has appeared in performance with her guru in multiple venues and has won several awards in Veena competitions held by the prestigious Cleveland Tyagaraja Utsavam and Chicago Tyagaraja Utsavam. As well, Nitya has given several solo-featured Veena concerts across the US and in India.

Nitya is also an advanced performer in the Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam and will be performing her arangetram (solo maiden recital) yet this year. She is currently a freshman pursuing a major in Chemical Engineering at the University of IL-Urbana-Champaign.

Amit Rajesh is a freshman at James Madison Memorial High School. He plays clarinet, alto saxophone and piano, and plays Western classical and Indian classical music, or Carnatic music. He has been learning Carnatic music from his guru Ms. Vanitha Suresh for the past seven years and is also mentored by Carnatic legend, Chitraveena Ravikiran. Amit has been a recipient of the folk arts apprentice program sponsored by the Wisconsin Arts Board to learn and play classical Indian music on the clarinet. He won First place at Cleveland Tyagaraja Indian Music festival in March 2014. For western music, he is under the tutelage of Peterson Ross, for saxophone, Bethany Schultz for clarinet and Gloria Chuang for piano and music theory. Amit has had the pleasure of being in multiple music ensembles, such as Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestra (WYSO) as a clarinet player since 2012. He has also played in the Middle School Jazz ensemble, Madison All-City Honors Band and is currently a member of Memorial High School band and Winds of Wisconsin, a premier high school wind ensemble held at UW-Madison campus.

Some accomplishments Amit has achieved have been winning exemplary soloist award at WSMA State Festival, in April, 2015, for clarinet and saxophone solo. First place in the Woodwind category in the Milwaukee Baroque festival, October 2014. Apart from music, he has been a high honors student throughout middle school and high school and won the President's Education Award for outstanding academic excellence in 8th grade. He represented Jefferson Middle School in Math counts and Science bowl programs. His hobbies include biking, playing music, playing tennis, and computer programming. He is a writer for his High School newspaper and a member of the cyber patriots club at Memorial High School. He volunteers as part of United Way's By Youth For Youth program and Music Makers program. He is truly passionate about music, computer science, and mathematics.

Arjun Ramachandran started learning Carnatic music at the age of 4. He originally began with vocal but started Mridangam (South Indian double-headed drum) around the age of 8. He is now a sophomore in high school. For Mridangam, he is currently under the tutelage of the illustrious Guru "Laya Chakravarthy" Sri. Tiruvarur Vaidyanathan.

Arun has participated in various competitions and won numerous awards, including Cleveland music competition. On various occasions, he has accompanied senior students and professional artists.

Sanjay Suresh is a fifth grader at Kromrey Middle School in Middleton, WI. He has been learning Carnatic vocal music from his mother Vanitha Suresh since the age of 3. He began his initial violin training from Shri. Srinivasa Murthy at the age of six, and has been learning violin under the tutelage of Shri. Chitravina N Ravikiran since 2012.

Sanjay won the 1st prize for Kriti, a musical composition characteristic of Indian classical music, in the prestigious Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana in 2014 and second in the Alapana (raga improvisation) competition in 2015. He has participated in the North American Melharmonic Orchestra, as well as the Chicago Tyagaraja Utsavam,

He is very passionate about Math and has won prizes in Math 24, Math Meet, NSF, and Math Kangaroo. He speaks Tamil and is familiar with Kannada. He plays the Western violin for the Middleton school orchestra. Besides music & math, he loves programming, and playing ice hockey, and actively participates in local community events.

Vanitha Suresh is a multi-faceted artist who has contributed significantly in the US art arena, particularly in the Midwest. She is a musician, mentor, promoter, and the founder of the Arohana School of Music in Madison, WI, an affiliate of the International Foundation of Carnatic Music.

Vanitha commenced her training on Veena at age 9 under Srirangam G. Rengarajan and in vocal from Srirangam Kannan and Akila Siva. She continued under guru T. N.Bala and also took a course on "Lalgudi Jayaraman Compositions" from Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi, Lalgudi G.J.R. Krishnan, and Sankari Krishnan. Vanitha is now pursuing advanced training under Sangeet Samrat Chitravina N. Ravikiran and Guru Chitravina Narasimhan.

She has presented vocal recitals in several cities in US and India, as well as in major festivals including the Chennai December Festival, Fulbright Scholars Meeting and the UW Science Fair. She is a recognized Master Artist and a recipient of the Wisconsin Arts Board's Folk Arts Apprenticeship Award in 2013 and 2014. She has collaborated with the Center for South East Asia and the Madison School District to conduct lecture-demonstrations on Carnatic Music in various schools and also involved herself in outreach music-education events in Public Libraries.

A number of Vanitha's students have won prizes in state and national level contests.. As an active member of the Indian Music Circle of Wisconsin, Vanitha regularly hosts performances of world-class Indian musicians in Madison, WI.

A software engineer by profession, Vanitha Suresh was the co-inventor of the revolutionary visual-metronome software, Taal Acharya, a first-of-its kind innovation for Indian musicians.