

Smt. Rama Ravi



Early training

Rama showed glimpses of her musical talents even as a child, possibly inheriting them from her mother Thulasi, an extraordinary musician and a disciple of Parur Sundaram Iyer. Rama's formative years were spent at Kalakshetra. Her exposure to and training under musicians of the calibre of Sangita Kalanidhis Mysore Vasudevacharya and Budalur Krishnamurthi Sastrigal and Vidwans M.D.Ramanathan and T.K.Ramaswami Iyengar played a decisive role in her development later as a musician. Subsequently, she also learnt from the late Sangita Kalanidhi D.K.Jayaraman. Simultaneously she learnt Bharatanatyam from Sarada Hoffman, "Periya" Sarada and Rukmini Arundale. Kalakshetra regarded her as a danseuse of great promise. In fact, she acted as Sita, a pivotal role, in the ballet, "Sita Swayamvaram".

Academic qualifications

Rama got her Bachelor's and Master's degree in Indian Music from the Stella Maris College, Madras. She followed this up with a dissertation entitled "Graces figuring in South Indian Music - Gamakas." Her thesis adviser was Dr.T.Viswanathan, then a Reader and Head of the Department of Music, at The Madras University. For this research work, she was awarded the M.Litt degree. She worked as Head of the Department of Music at Sitalakshmi Ramaswamy College, Tiruchi for two years.

Prizes

During her student days Rama Ravi won numerous first prizes, including the coveted Tambura prizes, from prestigious organizations like the Music Academy and the Tamil Isai Sangam. In the annual music competitions of the A.I.R in 1964, she received the first prize in classical carnatic music (vocal) and the second prize in light classical music (vocal). The Ravi Verma memorial prize awarded to her by Madras University marked the culmination of a very distinguished academic career.

Fellowship

- a) In 1975 the Sangeet Natak Academy awarded Rama Ravi the Muthuswamy Dikshitar Bi-Centenary fellowship. This fellowship enabled her to specialize in Dikshitar Kritis under the guidance of Sangita Kalanidhi B.Rajam Iyer.
- b) She has had the distinction of holding a senior fellowship of the Govt. of India, awarded to outstanding artistes (2001-2003)
- c) Among other distinctions she received the prestigious 'Sangeetha Kala Acharya' award from the Music Academy, Madras, in January 2012, in recognition of her service to the cause of music.

Career as a musician

- a) Rama Ravi is an "A-TOP" grade artist of All India Radio. She has figured in Sangeet Sammelan recitals and National Programmes of AIR and has performed on Doordarshan including the National programme (CPC-Delhi). The AIR presented her in a special programme of 'Padams' jointly with Smt. D.K.Pattammal and Dr.Balamuralikrishna (1972). The AIR Vijayawada invited her to perform before an invited audience and also for a special recording and broadcast of 'Javalis'(1981).
- b) Her career as a concert musician spans over five decades. She has given concerts all over the country and abroad. She has performed under the auspices of the Music Academy, Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Naada Inbam and several prestigious organizations in New Delhi, Calcutta, Lucknow, Mumbai, Hyderabad and elsewhere. These concerts received very good reviews from the press. She received the "Best Musician" award from the Music Academy (1984).

- c) She sang at the Autumn Festival of Paris with T.Rukmini and Tanjore Upendran as accompanying artistes. Her uncompromising classicism found the approbation of the discerning Parisian audience. These concerts were broadcast over the National Channel of the French Radio (1981).
- d) In fall 2002, she was invited by the Carnatic Music Association of North America (CMANA) for a 10 week concert tour of the U.S.A and Canada.
- e) In 2006, Rama Ravi was invited to participate and perform in the Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival. In October the same year, she performed at the Thyagaraja Festival in Paris.
- f) She was again invited by the Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival committee in April 2012, specially, to participate in the Birth Centenary celebrations of the legendary Smt.T. Brinda
- g) Rama Ravi is in the panel of experts in the ICCR (Indian Council of Cultural Relations), Govt. of India.

Rama Ravi as a Musicologist:

Rama Ravi's training as a musicologist has given her a deep insight into the grammar of music and sharpened her analytical skills. As a musicologist, she has presented papers on different topics at various music conferences and seminars. She has given lec-dems at the Music Academy, Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Sri Parthasarathi Swami Sabha, Chennai and also at Philadelphia, New Jersey, and elsewhere. Her paper on "Gamakas" was adjudged the best at the Music Academy in 1988. She presented a paper on Syama Sastri followed by a concert, on Syama Sastri day at the Music Academy (May 1996). Rama Ravi conducted a workshop on Syama Sastri and his descendants at the Music Academy in June 2010.

She participated in series of Raghanubhava & Sahithyanubhava Lec-Dems arranged by other well known organizations. She presented a Lec-Dem on Mysore Vasudevacharya at the Kalakshetra Festival in New Delhi, in November 2011.

Rama Ravi also participated in the workshop on 'Dhanammal Baani' conducted at Kalakshetra in January 2012.

Rama Ravi's forte

Rama Ravi has come to be regarded as one of the leading vocal exponents of the Dhanammal School. She has imbibed from Sangita Kalanidhi Dr.T.Viswanathan ("Viswa") the subtleties, the nuances and the modes of expression characteristic of this School, which represent the Vainika-Gayaka tradition. In addition, she has also gained considerably from the guidance given by the late Sangita Kalanidhi Smt.T.Brinda, Smt.T.Muktha and Sri.T.Sankaran (formerly of the AIR). Her music exhibits unswerving adherence to tradition. Dignity and refinement are cardinal elements of her style of singing. Sangita Kalanidhis like Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, M.S. Subbulakshmi, D.K.Pattammal, D.K.Jayaraman, K.V.Narayanaswami held Rama Ravi in great esteem precisely for these attributes.

Miscellaneous

Rama Ravi's curiosity took her to the realms of Hindustani Music. She learnt Hindustani Music under the guidance of the late Pt. Vinay Chandra Maudgalya of Gandharva Mahavidhyalaya, New Delhi. She earned the Visharad degree with distinction from this institution. She has also served there as a Head of the Carnatic Music division for four years. Rama Ravi is also conversant with playing techniques of the Veena and the Mridangam.

Since June 2005, Rama Ravi has been serving as visiting faculty at her Alma Mater, Kalakshetra, Chennai.