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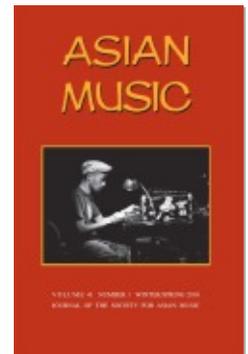
Lalgudi G. Jayaraman: Singing Violins , and: *U. Srinivas: Mandolin Melodies* (review)

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then as they do here as aide-memoire of the wonderful, longer, musically and poetically expansive, live performances that still exist in Middle Eastern musical culture.

As Mitchell points out, *Les Artistes Arabes Associés' Cafés Chantants du Caire, Volume 2 Les Almées*, offers a good companion recording as does *Women of Istanbul* (Traditional Crossroads 1998, CD 4280). The latter presents recordings of Turkish female stars across a relatively broad spectrum of musical entertainment; and we must bear in mind that women of Cairo and Istanbul traveled to one another's cities (and regions) with some frequency to perform. At the risk of self promotion, I would like to mention that an old article of my own broadens the context of this recording (Danielson 1991).

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Lalgudi G. Jayaraman: *Singing Violins*. One CD, with a 12-page booklet of liner notes, by Vamanan, and one photograph. Turin, Italy: Felmay Fy 8094, 2005.

U. Srinivas: *Mandolin Melodies*. One CD, with an 8-page booklet of liner notes, by Vamanan, and one photograph. Turin, Italy: Felmay Fy 8091, 2005.

Felmay (www.felmay.it) is an Italian world music record company that produces jazz, klezmer, "global fusion," Asian and African music, and other CDs, as well as DVDs and CD-ROMs. Its roster includes famous Indian classical musicians such as Hariprasad Chaurasia, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Dr. N. Ramani, and Balamuralikrishna. The first of the CDs considered here is the second recording in Felmay's catalogue by the legendary violinist Lalgudi Jayaraman. (The catalogue also contains another CD featuring Jayaraman's two children, but not

Jayaraman himself.) The other CD to be considered here is Felmay's second recording by Srinivas, the performer responsible for bringing the electric mandolin into the Carnatic instrumentarium. The accompanying musicians on these CDs include illustrious names such as Jayaraman's aforementioned two children (both violinists) and Vellore G. Ramabhadran (mridangam) on the former, and violinist A. Kanyakumari on the latter. Not surprisingly, the recordings do not disappoint; the recording quality is excellent, and the CDs present a variety of genres (*ālāpāna* and *tillāna*, the latter a specialty of Jayaraman, as well as a number of *kr̥itis*).

The liner notes focus in part on biographical material on the two main musicians—as well as some notes on Jayaraman's native place, Lalgudi—and descriptions of the texts of some of the compositions. No complete texts are included, but the section on “Nannu Paalimpa Natachi Oचितivo,” the fifth performance on the Jayaraman CD, includes many of the words, as well as an interesting tale about how Tyagaraja composed it. (About half of the compositions on the two CDs are by Tyagaraja, the best known of the “Trinity” of great Carnatic music composers active around 1800.) The lyrics of two of the three Tyagaraja compositions on the Srinivas CD are also discussed thoroughly. This is particularly appropriate since, as is well known, the Carnatic genre *kr̥iti* is quintessentially vocal; even when instruments and not voices perform it (as is the case here), the listener is supposed to contemplate the words.

I was frustrated, however, by the impressionistic tone of the liner notes' musical descriptions, which generally did not facilitate close listening. For instance, the notes for the first composition on the Jayaraman CD, “Brova Bhaaramaa” (Tyagaraja), refer to “melodic variations,” “improvisatory note formations,” “the workaday musician's tendency towards frenetic energy,” and “swara volleys” (5–6). I am pretty sure that “swara volleys” means *svāra kalpana*, less sure that “melodic variations” and “improvisatory note formations” refer to *sangatis* and *niraval*, respectively, and am guessing that “frenetic energy” has something to do with *kanakku* (calculations), the special emphasis many modern Carnatic musicians place on the rhythmic, as opposed to melodic, aspects of improvisation, as well as on fast tempos. These descriptions would have been more comprehensible if the Indian terms had been given and then translated. Perhaps the author thought that he could better communicate to a Western audience by avoiding Carnatic terms, but this does not explain his informing us that Ranjani rāga is “attributed to the 59th melakarta Dharmavati,” or that Gambhiravani is “attributed to Naaganandhini, the 30th Melakarta raaga” (6–7). Nowhere do we learn the ascending and descending scale forms of either rāga, or the pitch classes used in either of these *mēlakartas*, or the outlines of the *mēlakarta* system itself. I would have appreciated more background material on rāga and *mēlakarta* in South India, so as to make the material on pitch organization more

understandable to a nonspecialist. The author states that part of the strength of the Srinivas CD is that it “brings the melodic richness of south Indian classical music within the easy reach of the Western listener” (Srinivas CD, 7), but one weakness of the liner notes is that they make unsuccessful attempts to bring the *forms* and *genres* of this music within our “easy reach” (by using ambiguous English terms rather than clear Carnatic ones), while the material on rāga and mēlakarta is for the most part out of the reach of Western listeners, aside from Indic ethnomusicologists.

I found some other aspects of the liner notes problematic as well. Rāga Mōhanam (1-2-3-5-6-1 ascending and descending) is described as “one of the oldest melodies known to man. Found in . . . the music of primitive tribes” (Jayaraman CD, 7–8). The back of the Srinivas CD lists its sixth composition as “Theeratha,” in rāga “Vilaiyattu,” and in tāla “Ragamalika,” by the composer Bharathiar; however, the liner notes explain correctly that the composition is actually “Theeraadha Vilaiyaattu Pillai” by the Tamil poet Subramanya Bharati (sometimes called Bharathiar). “Ragamalika” refers of course the rāgas of the composition, not the tāla. Finally, I was dismayed that the Srinivas CD’s liner notes contained so little on its last composition, a “Western Note” (much less than a sentence). This genre, upon which there is very little literature (see Weidman 2006, 33), dates back over a century and includes influences of Western popular genres such as the waltz, and bits of Western harmony. As I listened to this “Western Note,” I pictured a group of Carnatic musicians giving a recital just after having listened to the complete works of Johann Strauss.

Although the listener would appreciate these recordings best after having consulted some of the Carnatic music literature (including Weidman 2006, 50, for more on the historical significance of Lalgudi Jayaraman), the performances themselves are excellent, as one would expect from two of the best-known contemporary Carnatic music artists.

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