

**Special Function to confer Special Lifetime Achievement Award on Shri. Lalgudi G.Jayaraman – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2008 – Welcome Address – N.MURALI**

Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman, the eminent persons on the stage who are to felicitate Shri Jayaraman, Sangita Kalanidhis, Vidvans and Vidushis, members of The Music Academy and other rasikas, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me very great pleasure to welcome you all to this Special Function in connection with the 80<sup>th</sup> year of The Music Academy being held to confer the Special Lifetime Achievement Award on violin maestro Shri Lalgudi G.Jayaraman. It is our particular honour and delight to have Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Governor of West Bengal, preside over the function and confer the Award. It is indeed gracious of him to have travelled all the way from Kolkata to be with us here today. As you all know, Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi is no stranger to Chennai.

After finishing his masters in English Literature from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, he joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1968, serving in different capacities in Tamil Nadu and was Secretary to the Vice President of India and Joint Secretary to the President of India before taking voluntary retirement from the IAS in 1992. He then took up the position of Minister (Culture) in the High Commission of India, U.K. and Director, The Nehru Centre, London. Of great significance was his appointment as High Commissioner for India in South Africa in 1996. He took up the position of Secretary to President of India in 1997, was appointed the High Commissioner for India in Sri Lanka in 2000, the Ambassador of India in Norway in 2002 before he took over as the Governor of West Bengal in December 2004. As Governor of West Bengal, he has spoken and acted with his conscience, which is a rare attribute of Governors these days.

Shri Gandhi is erudite, a multifaceted personality, author, writer and also a translator. He authored a novel "Refuge" on the subject of Indian Tamil plantation labourers in Sri Lanka and a play "Dara Shukoh" on the life of Emperor Shah Jahan's eldest son. He has translated into Hindustani, Vikram Seth's "A Suitable Boy".

He is deeply interested in culture and classical fine arts. Above all, he is a person of great dignity and humility. It is but fitting that he presides over this special function and confers the Special Lifetime Achievement Award on violin maestro Shri Lalgudi G.Jayaraman.

I thank Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi for so kindly agreeing to preside over this function and his wife Shrimathi Tara for her gracious presence. I extend a very special welcome to Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman in whose honour this function is held.

I extend a special welcome to the eminent persons on the dais who have spontaneously agreed to offer their felicitations to Shri Lalgudi G.Jayaraman on this occasion – Sangita Kalanidhi Shri T.N.Seshagopalan, Sangita Kalanidhi Shri M.Chandrasekaran, Sangita Kalanidhi Shri R.K.Srikantan, Shri B.M. Sundaram, Smt. Chitra Visweswaran and Guru Shri Kaaraikkudi R.Mani. To Smt. Bombay Jayashree who has just rendered the beautiful invocation and to Smt. Rhadha who is presenting an episode from "Jaya Jaya Devi" later today.

The Music Academy is now in its auspicious 80<sup>th</sup> year, having been formally inaugurated on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1928. We, who are privileged to be in charge of running its affairs during these extremely significant times, take this opportunity to salute the vision, farsightedness and tireless and selfless dedication of those public spirited persons of eminence who founded, nurtured and developed the great institution to this level of pre-eminence over the last eight decades.

We rededicate ourselves to uphold the core classical values that the Academy is famous for, taking into account the need for the right blend of tradition, artistic excellence and modernity.

Our Executive Committee decided that the first act in commemoration of its 80<sup>th</sup> year would be to confer a 'Special Lifetime Achievement Award' on a musician whose contribution to Carnatic music has been monumental. The name that spontaneously came up is that of the living legend of Carnatic Music, the violin maestro Shri. Lalgudi G. Jayaraman. We thank Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman for agreeing to receive this special award today. The Academy has not honoured him earlier. There cannot be a worthier occasion than this and a worthier musician than Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman to receive this special, one-time commemorative Award. Further, there cannot be a worthier person to preside over this function and confer the award than Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi.

Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman is a giant among musicians, occupying a pre-eminent position in the pantheon of all time greats of Carnatic music. His monumental contribution to Carnatic music has been multisplendoured and has earned for him widespread appreciation, accolades, and affection.

Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman's musical lineage is impeccable and he hails from a family of musicians that traces its guru parampara to the saint-composer Thyagaraja. His great grandfather Shri Lalgudi Rama Iyer was a direct disciple of the saint-composer, who visited Lalgudi, offered prayer at the village shrine there and composed five songs the Pancharatna in praise of the deity and his consort. The saint composer also set foot in their house at the invitation of Shri Lalgudi Rama Iyer. Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman has said that he treasures that good fortune the most and that perhaps accounts for his Sangeetha. Such was the emotional significance Shri Jayaraman attached to his native place Lalgudi, that it has now become synonymous with his own name. He learned his music from his father Shri Gopala Iyer who was brilliant, a strict disciplinarian and who identified sparks of genius in his young son. The youngster worked hard and soon mastered the art. On the sound musical foundation laid by his father, Shri Jayaraman built a fine edifice composed of ragas, swaras and all things musical.

Soon the young Jayaraman's musical prowess attracted the attention of everyone including stalwarts. At the Pudukottai Thyagaraja festival Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar forced to find a replacement for the indisposed Papa Venkatramaiah, told the organizers to fix up Kandaswamy Bhagavathar's nephew young Jayaraman. Madurai Mani Iyer prophesied "this boy will go places". Palgaht Mani Iyer marveled at his musical acumen. Shri Jayaraman has accompanied scores of great vocalists across generations, and also noted flautists and veena players.

Even as early as 1958, Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman emerged as a 'soloist'. News of Lalgudi's virtuosity spread throughout India and even beyond its shores. He soon established himself on the international circuit too. He participated in the Edinburgh Festival in 1965 and the legendary Yehudi Menuhin was so overwhelmed by his artistry that he gifted the Indian maestro an Italian violin. Shri Lalgudi performed frequently abroad.

Thus, over the last six decades he has been an exemplar of excellence, his art rising as a mighty tidal wave from the depths of the vast ocean of Carnatic music, in terms of musical calibre, performing ingenuity, discipline and remarkable staying power. The maestro has been constantly in search of something fresh and purposeful in his own musical idiom.

His bani is firmly rooted in total commitment to traditional values, analytical thought, discipline and perseverance. He has been described as not only a visionary but also a 'revolutionary' in musicianship. He hardly ever trespasses the boundaries of classicism, yet redefines the art with a refreshing approach that has placed him firmly at the top echelons of Carnatic music.

In playing the violin, Shri Lalgudi represents a fine blend of technical skills and musical skills. He has pioneered a new tradition of violin accompaniment with his ability to blend, to complement any style effortlessly. Shri Jayaraman has used technique as a means to project basically voice and sahitya-oriented music

of the Carnatic system and to give expression to musical values and his own musical ideas. His knowledge and understanding of the role of an accompanist in a Carnatic music vocal concert underscored his competence as a sideman and led to his oft-repeated statement that the main artist is the King and violinist is only the Prime Minister. According to the Sruti Foundation Study Group set up to analyse the Lalgudi Bani in the year 1990, the following are its main characteristics: use of the violin to project music as sung as far as possible; intellectual approach to music; attention to grammar, strong sense of laya, emphasis on aesthetics, structured alapanas, fidelity to sahitya structure and bhava which can come only from a knowledge of lyrics and from learning to sing the songs, introduction of sangatis of own creation in kritis and attention to musical interpretation of the lyrics in the presentation of lighter compositions.

Shri Jayaraman's versatility and genius extends to composing too. He has several varnams, padavarnams and tillanas to his credit. He has also composed kritis, operas and orchestral pieces (vadyavindradas).

His dance opera "Jaya Jaya Devi" is a resounding success having received rave reviews both abroad and in India. In fact, as a finale to to-day's function, we will have an episode from "Jaya Jaya Devi" choreographed and presented by Smt. Rhadha.

Shri Lalgudi, to everyone's pleasant surprise, even agreed to compose music for the film "Srīngaram" directed by Sharada Ramanathan for which the maestro received the National Award for Best Music Direction.

Shri Lalgudi's offerings to the world of Carnatic Music extend beyond his music and compositions. In 1985, he voluntarily stepped in to renovate the dilapidated houses of the legendary Trinity at Tiruvarur. The Lalgudi Trust also engages in several philanthropic activities and music education.

Shri Lalgudi is also a sincere and munificent teacher. He has guided many disciples. His son G.J.R.Krishnan and daughter Vijayalakshmi hold the Lalgudi

flag aloft as torch bearers of the famous bani. Shri Lalgudi is a caring family man and he has received inspiration and tremendous support from his mother Smt. Savitri Ammal who is well past ninety and his affectionate wife Smt. Rajalakshmi.

Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman's association with the Music Academy has been long and fruitful. In fact, he was launched on the concert platform in Chennai in the 1948 December season of the Academy when he accompanied Shri K.V.Narayanaswamy in the afternoon session at 3.30 p.m. Vidvans were curious to know that a young man from Lalgudi was playing well and so GNB, Alathur Brothers, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Chembai and Chowdaiah were all seated before the young Lalgudi at the concert. It was truly baptism by fire for the young lad. Over the decades, Shri Jayaraman has enthralled rasikas at the Academy accompanying stalwarts and also as a soloist. It may also be pointed out that Shri Lalgudi accompanied some of the stalwarts in the year they received the Sangita kalanidhi award, particularly Madurai Mani Iyer and Alathur Brothers. He has presided over the Sadas in the year 1990 when Shri D.K.Jayaraman received the birudu of Sangita Kalanidhi from him. Even recently, during the 2005 December season, he, along with Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi gave a lecture-demonstration on the "Lalgudi Bani".

At this juncture I would like to acknowledge with thanks that Drs. Leela and Engikolai Krishnan based in U.S.A. who are ardent rasikas of Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman and well wishers and patrons of the Music Academy over the years, have expressed their desire to institute a cash award of Rs.1 lakh for the Special Lifetime Achievement Award to Shri Lalgudi G.Jayaraman in connection with the 80<sup>th</sup> year of the Music Academy. This award will be in the name of "Smt. Meenakshi and Mysore Asthana Vidwan Engikolai Chidambara Ganapatigal" and will be handed over to Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman as soon as the formalities under

the regulations governing foreign contributions are completed. This is in addition to what the Academy itself is doing.

In conclusion, let me say that to-day is a proud and joyous day in the annals of this great eighty year old institution as we all gather here to honour one of Carnatic music's greatest legends and a colossus among musicians, Shri Lalgudi G.Jayaraman. The Music Academy has not honoured Shri Lalgudi G.Jayaraman earlier. I may be permitted the liberty of drawing a parallel here. On the day of Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary last year, it was widely reported in the media that the Nobel Foundation regretted not giving the Peace Prize to that great "Apostle of Peace", who is also the grandfather of our Chief Guest, Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi. Well, dear friends and rasikas, in all humility and sincerity let me say that the Music Academy has done better than the Nobel Foundation at least in seeking to erase the mistake and the aberration. In its auspicious 80<sup>th</sup> year, the Academy takes particular pride and joy in conferring the Special Lifetime Achievement Award on the "musician among musicians" Shri Lalgudi G. Jayaraman. Our Chief Guest Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi will be conferring the Award later in the evening.

On behalf of all of us gathered here I wish Shri Lalgudi G.Jayaraman a long life and continued great service and contribution to our wonderful tradition of classical fine arts.

Thank you very much.