

# Mridangam

## 'THA', 'THI', 'THOUM' and 'NUMM'



The above words seem Greek and Latin to most ordinary folk, but connoisseurs of music will immediately associate with these rhythmic notes as music to their ears.

Ananthram L. Nath mesmerized the GSK Bangalore attendees at the Zovirax launch with his rhythmic movements. Nath, as he is popularly known, started the session with a masterpiece and then reached another zenith towards the end of the program. He dismisses this talent as a hobby

that he is passionate about, but there is more to this statement. Nath is a renowned musician. He began his musical affiliation at a very tender age of four when he crawled up besides his guru, Shri Narayan Iyer, during *sankirtans* and stayed awake for entire performances. This impressed the guru so much that he took the child under his wing and guided him. This "guru and shishya" relationship lasted for over 13 years and paved the way for him to come in contact with his passion - MUSIC.

Nath mentions that music is the tonic of his life and that he would never have achieved what he is today without the support of his family and the guidance of his gurus. And through this ideology, Nath has touched thousands of lives by giving them an opportunity to witness his divine work.



With Padmashree Dr K J Yesudas during a recording session at Tharangini Studios

Under Shri Rajamani, he learnt a completely new method of performance, called the Thanjavur School of percussion playing. He perfected the placement and position of the fingers while playing the instrument "Mridangam", during this training. Nath attributes this to be the best phase of his learning where in once again the guru - shishya relation was reborn.

Another person Nath recalls, besides his gurus, is his mother, who made it a discipline for him to practice his music, come what may.



In concert with Violin Samrat Sangeetha Kalanidhi Shri M Chandrasekhar

So, under the guidance of four maestros, evolved another master. His relentless practice and unmatched dedication perfected his techniques. His creativity then took him a notch further.

Nath's first major concert was at the age of thirteen for the Sangeetha Kalanidhi Shri N P Ramaswamy, held at the Kerala fine arts Society (Ernakulam) in the year 1970. Nath has won several awards for his contribution to percussion. Nath has given his percussion support for various light music, film and devotional songs recordings. He also played for various television serials and then ventured into the big screen late in the 1970s. Nath is a very close friend of the Malayalam screen actor Padmashree Mammooty. He initially got parts in films through his



Receiving an award from Padmashree Dr K J Yesudas in May 2006

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friends and later, his reputation carried him places unheard of. Nath has played with some of the great playback singers of this era. He recalls every one of them, but the list is too long to list here. Some of the more prominent celebrities and film play back singers with whom Nath had the privilege to perform are Padmashree Dr K J Yesudas, Padmashree Dr Balamurali Krishna, Padmashree Shri Hariharan, Shri S Jayachandran, M G Shreekrumar, Parumbavoor Shri Ravindranath, Smt P Susheela Madam, Smt S Janaki, Smt P Leela Madam, Shri Unni Menon and Shri G Venugopal.

Some of the great music composers with whom Nath had the opportunity to work with, include great stalwarts like Vaikom Shri P Dakshinamurthy, Shri M K Arjunan, Shri Raghavan Master, Mellisai Mannan Shri M S Viswanathan, Kolathupuzha Shri Raveendran, Jerry Amaldev, Rex Issac and Shri Mohan Sitara. Nath says that the only thing that mattered when he was with a composer was that the same wavelength needed to be found. The rest followed. In fact, one of the most recognizable characteristics of Nath's music is the understanding he had about the composer and the song.



During a recording session at Tharangini Studios, 1984

Nath's movie career didn't just limit itself to the music arena; he has acted in a few films himself, like *Agraham* and *Sathyabhamakku oru prema lekhanam*. He has played parts in films with actors like Manoj K Jayan and Jayaram. Nath has also given percussion support to plays directed by Malayalam actor Tilakan.

Nath is a Science graduate from Kerala University and a Diploma holder in Marketing and Sales Management from Bhavan's Institute of Mass Communication, Mumbai. He has completed a certificate course in Supply Chain Management from IIT, Delhi. He has also done his Post-graduate Degree in Master of Business Administration (MBA) from ITM, Mumbai.

Nath is associated with GSK for the last 27 years. He started his career as a Medical Representative with East India Pharmaceuticals Ltd, in the year 1976. In 1980, he joined Burroughs Wellcome India Ltd, as a Medical Representative with field territory in Kerala. After 16 years in the field, he moved into Supply Chain management in 1996 and was based in Mumbai. Nath moved into Demand Planning activities in 2006.

Nath believes that once on the stage one must forget being an individual and become a team player. An orchestra can never be as effective if played by unsynchronized individual geniuses. He feels the only way one can leave behind a lasting impression in music is when individual performers work together in harmony. When mentioned that he is a vidwan in this art, Nath smiles and replies, "Music is like an ocean and its learning is never complete".



In concert with Dr V G Oke during the Zovirax Launch at Bangalore



A life time achievement with the greatest music composer Shri Vaikom Dakshinamoorthy during a song recording for a Malayam film in 1983 at Aalap Studios

## Some Milestones

- | Year      | Event  |
|-----------|--|
| 1966      | First prize at state level for "Mridangam" won at nine years of age organized by Kerala Sangeetha Nataka academy   |
| 1970-1971 | Stood first at state level competition conducted by The Kerala Fine Arts and Culture Society   |
| 1972      | Received the first prize from Sangeetha Kalanidhi Shri Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar   |
| 1974-1975 | Stood first at inter collegiate state level competition  |
| 2006      | Received the prestigious award from the hands of Padmashree Dr K J Yesudas for outstanding contribution to devotional and carnatic music by way of giving percussion support in "Mridangam" for over 25 years. This award and honour was from an institution Thyagabrahmmam in Cochin of which Nath was one of the founder members along with music composer Shri T S Radhakrishnaje |

## Stage Performances and Recordings

- 1970 - First major stage concert with Sangeetha Kalanidhi Shri N P Ramaswamy at Kerala Fine Arts Society, Ernakulam when aged 13 years
- 1972 - Was the main percussion player in a major Thalavadhya laya program
- 1973 - Gave "Mridangam" accompaniment to Sangeetha Kalanidhi Violin Samrat Shri M Chandrasekhar for a major concert at Kerala Kala Peetam
- The first tour to performance out of the country saw Nath and T S Radhakrishnaje at Singapore in 1983
- Gave "Mridangam" accompaniment to film play back singer Madras Shri Unnikrishnan at Annual music festival of Ramakrishna Bhajan Samaj Bangalore 1989
- Has given percussion accompaniment for the numerous recordings of Padmashree Dr K J Yesudas produced by Tharangini music
- Has provided percussion support for a musical teleserial composed by Padmashree Dr Balamurali Krishna on Doordarshan with 36 episodes
- Has been regularly assisting percussion requirements to Music Composer Shri Radhakrishnaje for all devotional, light music and film song recordings
- Has provided percussion support for the recordings of Padmashree Bombay Hariharan for all Magna sound cassette devotional music production recorded at Aalap studios
- Has provided percussion support for a *Namsankirtan* composed by late Guru Mohan Rao Pai and sung by Maharashtra Abhang Ratna Shri K Ganesh Kumar having 56 episodes. This was produced by the All India Radio, Mumbai
- Gave "Mridangam" accompaniment to Maharashtra Abhang Ratna Shri K Ganesh Kumar for a video creation of Sloka.com
- Accompanied Thanjavur Shri V Iyengar during the 145th Thyagareja Aradhanai festival at Thiruvaiyarthi which was telecast on national network by DD Kendra
- Performed at over 70 major music concerts
- Provided "Mridangam" accompaniment in over 700 cassette recordings
- Was the main percussion artist for the musical presentation composed in memory of a great scholar named Shri Bhattathirpad and presented by Shri Dakshinamoorthy at the Guruvayoor temple that was organized by the Guruvayoor Devasom Board for which our former President of India Shri V V Giri was the chief guest of honour