



Swaramala

Soundbytes from SIOC

Mar 2023

SIYOC makes a vibrant debut



It was A Vibrant New Dawn at 5pm on 5th February 2023, as the Singapore Indian Youth Orchestra and Choir (SIYOC) presented their inaugural concert, 'Gaana Prakasham', to a full house at the OTH Theatre. The 29 youngsters looked poised, and made their conductors and instructors proud with a professional rendition of challenging pieces from SIOC's eclectic repertoire. The occasion was graced by the warm presence and valuable support of Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Community & Youth and Ministry of Social & Family Development, Adviser to Tanjong Pagar GRC Grassroots Organisations (Queenstown), **Mr. Eric Chua**, who graciously agreed to come on board as SIOC Advisor.

Find out more about the vision behind the SIYOC and a review of the concert, on [pages 3 & 4](#).



Pongalo Pongal with SIOC

As the auspicious *Pongal Paanai* bubbled over in homes, it was accompanied by an abundance of melodious classical music and festive cheer as the SIOC team of singers and musicians ushered in Pongal day, on Vasantham TV's Raagangal Palavitham festive special edition, on the morning of 15th January 2023.



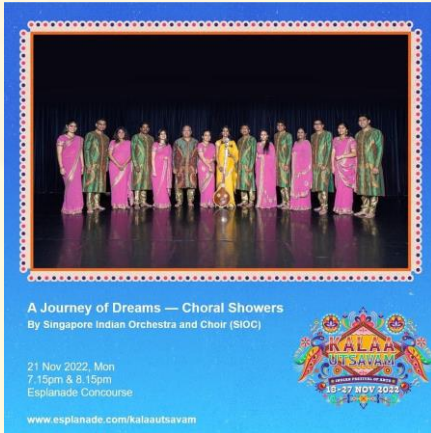


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SIOC at Kalaa Utsavam 2022



A Journey of Dreams — Choral Showers
By Singapore Indian Orchestra and Choir (SIOC)

21 Nov 2022, Mon
7.15pm & 8.15pm
Esplanade Concourse

www.esplanade.com/kalaa utsavam



SIOC was part of the prestigious Kalaa Utsavam 2022 at the Esplanade. The Choral team presented “A Journey of Dreams - Choral Showers”, at the Esplanade Concourse on 21st Nov 2022. It was a scintillating choral showcase of Indian classical and folk music blending with western choral techniques, including a vibrant Acapella.



Deepavali at the National Museum Member in the Spotlight



Our SIOC Choir kept the lights of Deepavali burning bright with a beautiful series of songs to mark the festive and joyous spirit, in the elegant setting of the National Museum, on the 12th of November 2022.

As the SIOC writes a new chapter as an independent performing arts company, it is a good time to put the spotlight on individual pioneers and members who have worked hard over the years to bring Indian music in Singapore to such outstanding levels. In this edition, we fondly remember the contributions of acclaimed musician and our pioneer extraordinaire, **(Late) Shri Muthu Rengasamy**. Read this detailed tribute by Sri Shankar Rajan [here](#).





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Smt K V Godha, Executive Administrator for the SINGAPORE INDIAN YOUTH ORCHESTRA AND CHOIR (SIYOC), talks about the vision behind the formation of SIOC's youth wing and the journey so far.



Bhanu: The youth wing, SIYOC, is an exciting extension of the SIOC. How did it shape up?

Godha: SIOC has a rich collection of about 200 rare repertoire pieces, specially composed for us by stalwarts like Late L Vaidyanathan, L Subramanian and many more musical legends, and we at SIOC felt that this treasure should be passed on to our next generation of artistes for posterity.

I have been a senior vocalist with SIOC for 10 years as well as project manager for productions. As I have been a key contributor and someone who understands SIOC's vision and work culture, Smt Lalitha Vaidyanathan, SIOC Founding-Conductor, approached me with the idea of starting a Youth Wing, and requested me to take up the responsibility as Executive Administrator for the same.

That's how the journey started for SIYOC from April 2022.

We followed a selection protocol, inviting interested talents to submit a Registration form, with number of years of learning (minimum 5 years) and a video sample for Vocal or Instrumental. Candidates selected on the basis of their learning experience and performance in the video, were invited to join the SIYOC.

Bhanu: What were some of the challenges faced in grooming the Youth Orchestra?

Godha: Yes, definitely it was a humungous challenge as the members are all in secondary school or college, and we had to contend with different academic calendars during their training period. We tried to get their commitment on Sundays for about 3 hours. They were also engaged in other ways, both in-person and online, for individual and group training, by our amazingly dedicated instructors, to prepare them for this upcoming concert.

The other major challenge was that they all had different learning styles and standards. Some had to be trained initially to read the notations. Smt Lalitha took the bold initiative of transposing the notations to Romanized SRG notations, as our compositions were originally in Carnatic notations and in Tamil script. Being part of an orchestra is a new experience for these youngsters, as they are not soloists here but have to learn to play parts, sing in harmony and - the toughest training challenge for us - play or sing in fast speed.

Bhanu: Tell us something about *Gaana Prakasham*, 'A Vibrant New Dawn'

Godha: The concert showcases a rich Carnatic repertoire along with SIOC's emblem of fusion music. One interesting item, I'd like to highlight is "Crossroads" where Indian and South East Asian flavors come together, with an Indian artist singing in Chinese and vice versa. This piece is a dedication by us as we are celebrating the Chinese New Year. There are a couple of other beautiful orchestration pieces where we have western symphony fusing well with our Carnatic pieces.



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SIYOC debut concert 'Gaana Prakasham' – A Vibrant New Dawn

Review by Shri Shankar Rajan, musician & musicologist



Introduction

The Founder Conductor and Artistic Director of the 37-Year-old Singapore Indian Orchestra and Choir (SIOC), Mrs Lalitha Vaidyanathan, fulfilled her dream, very successfully, with the debut concert of Singapore Indian Youth Orchestra (SIYOC). One of the hallmarks of a good musician is the preparation of the next generation of musicians. Thirty very young musicians took the world by storm and made Lalitha, her team of conductors and instructors very proud.

Repertoire

Repertoire selection was excellent. The invocatory piece consisting of two mantras, the Ganesh Gayatri mantra and another in praise of Lord Muruga was aptly chosen as the concert was performed on Thaipusam day. Finesse and Devotion shined. Kudos to Lalitha. The pancharatnam medley that followed could have been rendered with a little more clarity.

"Shruthi Bedam" presented a very interesting exchange between the vocalists and instrumentalists. Composed by the (late) L.Vaidyanathan, the piece successfully brought out the tonal shift of the swaras (notes) to obtain ragas Simhendramadhyamam and Shankarabaranam. The young flautist Sabapathy Thirupathy Ramana must be singled out for his prowess. He had a heavy load on his shoulders as he was not only the solo flautist but also had no other blowing instrument support and his overall performance while there was a few shruti lapses, it was outstanding.

"Kailasa Shaila Bhuvane", composed by the famous dancer Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam had always been a favourite of SIOC and was lovingly rendered by the young SIYOC musicians. Absolute melody at its peak!



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The 'piece de resistance' must surely be "Crossroads" which was a judicious crossing of Indian and Chinese music styles that reflected the uniqueness of Singapore's cultural diversity. A combined orchestral effort of Lalitha and Sri L.Vaidyanathan, the orchestration brought out the confluence of Carnatic "Raravenu" in Bilahari ragam with the ever-popular Chinese New Year melody 'Xi Yang Yang'. The Chinese guest singer Ms Foo Yue Ning was at her best. This item was singled out by the Guest-of-Honour Mr Eric Chua as outstanding. Indian group singing has traditionally been rendered in unison.

Singing in parts was 'foreign' to Indian Carnatic music. Musician Radha Vijayan's two pieces "Kadalin Meethu" and "Kaniyidai" were chosen for the choral singing. As the young lads are going through a voice-break it was not easy for them. The rendition did sound a little rough and maybe the choice of song could have been better to suit the male-female voice combination.

The Ramar Bhajan was adequate. Violin maestro Dr.L.Subramaniam's Dwijavanti thillana was rendered with full oomph and an energetic "tani avartanam" (drums solo). Bharat Ratna M.S.Subbulakshmi's popular "Oli Padaitha", a Bharathiyar composition was the finale piece and, ended with the chanting of the Shanthi Mantra.

Conclusion

I would be failing in my review if I do not mention the very readable programme brochure, excellent backdrops and visuals, the brilliant emceeing by Sowmya Gopi and Priya Murali and the well-organised stage management.

What a concert! 90 minutes of pure bliss.

Shankar Rajan



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Member in the Spotlight – (Late) Shri Muthu Rengasamy aka Uncle Muthu

Born in Muar, Malaysia in 1942, as Shunmugam Rengasamy, he changed his name to Muthu when he was in his early 20s, as he loved pearls (*muthu* in Tamil) and used to play the Pearl Drum.

Muthu's parents moved to Singapore when he was only 5. As an adult he worked with the PUB and travelled with ships as an experienced machinist. He was also an excellent cook, his friends would 'die' for his mutton dishes and special pickles.

Muthu breathed music all his life. He could play an array of percussion instruments such as the Pearl drum, mridangam, tabla, dholak, kanjira, and morsing (jaw harp). He became a regular percussionist with FEBRA Music Party and subsequently with PA Indian Orchestra which eventually became SIOC. Other than a long and fruitful association with SIOC, he also performed with SIFAS and assisted in the maintenance of instruments.

Muthu travelled to Malaysia, India, Japan, Hongkong and Macau as a performer and won wide acclaim. In recognition of his contributions to Indian music in Singapore, he received several accolades from PA, Bhaskar's Academy and Singapore Arts Academy.

Muthu Rengasamy belonged to an exclusive group of musicians who held centrestage in Indian percussion music for more than four decades. His untimely demise in April 2020 is a great loss to the Indian classical music fraternity in Singapore. For his invaluable contributions to SIOC and lasting accomplishments in the field of Indian music, SIOC fondly remembers "Uncle Muthu" as a PIONEER EXTRAORDINAIRE.



Tribute written by:

Shri Shankar Rajan
Musician & Musicologist
SIOC Member





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volunteer or patron?
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to connect with you!**



contact@sioc.com.sg



<https://www.sioc.com.sg/>



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PC for Gaana Prakasham:
music360, 2023 (SIYOC Digital partner)