



Swaramala

Soundbytes from SIOC

April 2024



A breath of fresh music!



On 10th March 2024, the SIOC presented our second major concert since we began our ambitious journey as an independent performing arts company in 2022, building on 37 successful years with the PA. The concert, held at the prestigious Victoria Theatre, was aptly titled “Spring Harmony” to herald the freshness of new bespoke compositions and novel path-breaking presentations, with emphasis on the universally harmonising force of music.

It was a privilege to present the creations of stalwart musicians such as the Late L Vaidyanathan, Rajkumar Bharathi, Embar Kannan, Rajhesh Vaidhya, and Lazar Thurakkal, to a diverse and enthusiastic Singapore audience.

We are delighted to share a review of Spring Harmony, posted on Facebook by the Guest of Honour at the concert, Minister Edwin Tong, the Minister for Culture, Community & Youth and Second Minister for Law. And, a peek into what it is like to be an SIOC musician, in the words of two recently-joined members who were part of this show. Read more about the show on [pages 3 & 4](#).



Rhythmic Rendezvous – a CNY special

Meanwhile, the young musicians of our youth wing – the SIYOC - added a musical sparkle to the Lunar New Year weekend with a 45-minute mini concert, at the beautiful Esplanade Outdoor Theatre. They performed 3 incredible sets for an appreciative audience, including a special Chinese song, to usher in the year of the Dragon in a true multicultural musical spirit.





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New Digital Gems



The SIOC and SIYOC released 4 new digital productions, Swaranjali, Reflections, Kapi Espresso! and Giriraja Sudha, which can be enjoyed on our dedicated [YouTube channel](#).

Find our more about these compositions on [page 5](#), and subscribe to our YouTube channel to enjoy these and our other digital gems again and again!

Music in the Heartlands

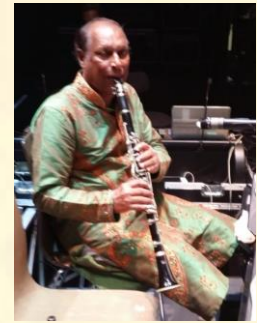


In the Heartlands series, made possible with the support of the Temasek Foundation, we collaborate to perform music at community venues in various housing estates, so that we can bring the joy of music to people from all walks of life.

Read more about these concerts on [page 5](#).



Member in the Spotlight



In this edition, we feature Sri Santhakumar, a clarinet and saxophone artiste and pioneering member of the Orchestra, who joined SIOC in 1985 and contributed richly to its growth over the years.

Read about Santhakumar's inspiring musical journey on [page 6](#).

Music appreciation workshop

While SIOC is known for path-breaking productions in the choral and orchestral space, we are also keen to train upcoming musicians in this specialised form of performing music. With that aim, we put together a unique music appreciation workshop on 24th March 2024, where participants learnt about the nuances of choral singing from an expert, our very own Resident Conductor, Senior Instructor and Artistic Head, Mrs Vicknesvari Vadivalagan.



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SIOC in concert with Spring Harmony



“Over 40 vocal and instrumental musicians from the Singapore Indian Orchestra and Choir (SIOC) showcased the Singapore spirit and multicultural harmony through music. I enjoyed listening to the fresh new melodies that were specially created for SIOC by musical maestros from Singapore and India, and the mix of Indian classical music with Chinese and Western ensemble.

The SIOC has been performing for almost 40 years, and many performers in the group are stalwarts with over 25 years of performance experience! It was indeed a treat to experience these masters in their element.

Thank you SIOC for contributing to a vibrant arts ecosystem right in the heart of Singapore!”

- Shared from a post on SIOC’s FB page by Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community & Youth and Second Minister for Law, who was the Guest of Honour at “Spring Harmony”





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Notes from the SIOC Rehearsal Room

Being part of SIOC's Spring Harmony show gave me my first ever chance performing in a Carnatic concert. It was a lovely and fulfilling experience. I was initially nervous at the idea of singing *ragamalika* or RTP or *thillana* on a big stage. That's where the rehearsal sessions helped build my confidence. Our instructors Smt Lalitha, Smt Vicknesvari and Smt Bharati taught us every composition with great passion, ensuring that we captured its essence and presented it with appropriate "*bhaavam*". The rehearsals also allowed me to interact with other instrumentalists and learn from them about their own musical journey. In a way, the rehearsals helped me overcome a lot of illusionary barriers to learning and performing Carnatic music.

With so much preparation, the actual concert was a very pleasant and a memorable experience. I am grateful for SIOC for this opportunity.

- Dushyanth Madhavan
(recent member, Choir)



I recently had the honour of participating in SIOC's Spring Harmony concert, in the Veena section. It was both, a challenging and rewarding experience. The training sessions were rigorous, but with the clear guidance and support of Lalitha ma'am, Vicknesvari ma'am, and Bharati ma'am, I felt motivated to practice even harder. As the concert date approached, rehearsals became even more intensive to build our stamina.

Among the diverse repertoire of 8 compositions, 'Dasavatharam' posed a particular challenge for me, requiring precise timing and coordination within the Veena section. With multiple *talas* and *layas* to navigate, staying attuned to our conductor, Vicknesvari ma'am, was essential. Practicing with the entire orchestra taught me a valuable lesson: focus is everything. Each section had its own unique notes, making it crucial not to get distracted.

Looking back, the training sessions have deepened my understanding of Veena and Carnatic music. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of SIOC, and eagerly anticipate more enriching experiences in the future.

- Sneha Babu
(recent member, Orchestra)





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New SIOC Digital Productions



The SIYOC opened the new year on a melodious note with their new digital production, [Swaranjali](#), which premiered on our YouTube channel in Jan 2024. An exhilarating composition by noted musician OS Arun, Swaranjali is a confluence of rising and falling notes that seamlessly flow through 7 different ragams. The young musicians deftly navigate the intricate note patterns and pay tribute to the magic of classical Indian music.

SIYOC released another digital production, [Reflections](#), based on a 2-ragam piece composed by the legendary Dr L Subramaniam specially for SIOC. Experience the illusion of reflections, created by harmonic changes played by the keyboards and a 3-part canon for ethnic infusion.

A composition evocative of the sublime joys of life - such as a steaming cup of coffee during the seasonal rains - the [Kapi Espresso!](#) is our new digital production that serves up a rich Indian classical flavour.

Just in time for the Indian new year celebrations in April, comes our latest digital gem, [Giriraja Sudha](#), a traditional Thyagaraja Krithi invoking Lord Ganesha, which has been cleverly adorned with a western touch in the form of background music played by the Orchestra.

SIOC Community Concerts

The SIOC choir presented a splendid acapella performance as part of the 'In the Heartlands' series, at the Jurong Regional Library on 17th March. Not to be left behind, our youth wing SIYOC did their part to make music accessible for all, through a free concert at the National Library on 21st March. Earlier, the SIOC presented a beautiful choral performance celebrating Pongal at the Indian Heritage Centre, on 13th January.

Audiences of all ages were seen enjoying the breezy mix of classical and contemporary music.

Coming up next: the SIYOC will perform at the Indian Heritage Centre on 13th April 2024.





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Member in the Spotlight: Sri Santhakumar

An outstanding musician in clarinet and saxophone, Sri Santhakumar joined SIOC in 1985 and has illustriously served for almost 40 years.

Born in Singapore in 1950, Santhakumar was self-taught in clarinet. He learnt saxophone under Yamaha Music School and received a Grade 3 certificate. He also spent some time learning Carnatic music from the Nadaswaram artiste of Sri Sivan Temple.

Using SIOC as a training ground, he excelled in both instruments. The only musician performing on 'blowing' instruments in SIOC, Santhakumar performed in several overseas SIOC shows, travelling to Malaysia, India, Japan, Hong Kong and more. It is noteworthy that, ultimately, it was his personal effort and determination that shaped him into a top-level musician.

Santhakumar continues to perform in Singapore Broadcasting Corporation's Indian section over radio and television. Even now, at age 73, this family man's adept time management enables him to serve as a grassroots leader in Paya Lebar CC, in addition to his job at ICA and his musical activities. This earned him the Singapore government's prestigious PBS award in 2014, for his contributions to Singapore. SIOC is proud of Santhakumar's skills, success and service.



- **Write-up by Sri Shankar Rajan, musician and retired SIOC Leader**





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**Looking to join us as an artist,
volunteer or patron?
Contact SIOC and we would love
to connect with you!**



contact@sioc.com.sg



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



**Stay connected with us and watch our digital productions.
Like, follow and subscribe to our social media channels**



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