

ARTISTE OF THE
MONTH

T R Balamani

VETERAN CARNATIC MUSIC TEACHER

76 year old TR Balamani's face lights up as she recalls the names of those whom she taught Carnatic Music, many of whom have made a name for themselves and are living not only in Mumbai but all across the globe.

Lakshmi V

T R Balamani is one of the senior Carnatic music teachers of Mumbai. Many contemporary singers, violinists, flautists, and veena players have learnt from her and she has been the recipient of several Music teacher awards. She still teaches Carnatic music to children as well as professional music teachers who take advanced Carnatic music lessons from her.

Born in Parakulam in Palakkad, Balamani belonged to a family of music lovers and singers. Her father TS Ramanatha Iyer was an MA (Honours) in Sanskrit from Annamalai University and worked as Post Master in several places in Kerala. He hailed from Thathamangalam in Chittoor and Balamani in her younger days performed several concerts in Kerala and Chennai along with her sister Sarasa, the duo being popularly known



T R Balamani performing at a concert with her daughter Ranjini Chander, on her right

as Thathamangalam Sisters. Her mother is the late Pachainayaki Ammal.

Balamani started learning Carnatic music at the age of 9. By 10 she started performing on the stage with swaras and alapanas.

Her first music teacher was Narayana Bhagavathar in Trippunithura. Later she studied under Raghavan Menon (Appu Menon). The late TK Govinda Rao was her mentor and inspiration and she was groomed by him. After Std X, Balamani joined the Central College of Music in Chennai and completed her Sangeeta Vidwan course in 1957. The veteran musician Musiri Subramania Iyer, the Principal encouraged her to continue advanced study in music. Balamani won the National Scholarship and continued her music study under the guidance of Musiri Subramania Iyer. Mayavaram Krishna Iyer, T Brinda, Thripambaram Swaminathan Pillai, Chittoor Subramania Pillai were her other teachers. Her subsidiary subject was veena which she learnt under MA Kalyanakrishna Bhagavathar, Devacottah Narayana Iyengar and Theory of Music under Balakrishnaiah.

Balamani got married in 1961 to the late NC Mani who hailed from Guruvayur and was working for Dodson Pvt Ltd. Mani was musically inclined and encouraged his wife to continue singing, give concerts and teach music. She was teacher of Carnatic music at Bharatiya Music and Fine Arts at Matunga.

Balamani has given several Carnatic concerts and has been recipient of several awards. Some of them are Chembur Fine Arts Society's Guru Vandana - Carnatic Music Teacher Extraordinaire, and its fifth Samaj Shakthi Award. She was the first recipient of Dr MS Subbulakshmi Best Music Teacher award instituted by Shanmukhananda Sabha. Naadabrahmam honoured her with Lifetime achievement Award and Citation.

In 2010, she presented a lecture on



Receiving honours from TK Govinda Rao



T R Balamani with her daughter, grandchildren and her student Shankar Mahadevan



Balamani and her husband NC Mani

Carnatic Music at the Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival where she received the Bhairavi Fine Arts Acharya Ratnakar Award for service to Indian Classical Arts. The Chennai Academy of Music and Fine Arts bestowed on her the Sangeetha Kala Acharya Award.

Balamani has a daughter Ranjini Chandar who is married and lives in Chennai with her husband V Chander. She teaches Carnatic and Hindustani music and gives concerts. Ranjini learnt Carnatic music from her mother and Hindustani music from Geetha Chanda and Thathachari. Her husband works as Senior Accounts Executive

Advice to aspiring Singers

- ▶▶ Learn sincerely and practise regularly.
- ▶▶ Attend Carnatic concerts and listen to all types of music.
- ▶▶ Learn music from one teacher at a time for a sufficient period of time so that you understand the nuances of classical music.

with Nestle. They have a daughter Shruti doing her 2nd year BCA and a son Siddharth studying in Std IX.

Balamani remembers her first student, Shantha Anantharaman, now in the US. Her other students include Shankar Mahadevan, Bombay Jayashree, Prasanna Warriar, Lakshmi Rajagopal, Vasumathi Badrinathan, Raji Gopalakrishnan, Vidya Balasubramaniam, Sujatha Sanjay, Reewa (daughter of Roopkumar Rathode and Shonali Rathode), Prasanna Venkataraman, Sanjeev Chimmalgi, (Disciple of CR Vyas), Sanjeev Subramaniam, Tamizharassan, Hema Balasubramanian (flute), Sathwa Srinath (Flute), N Prasad (Flute), Sharada Murali, Uma Maheswaran (violin), Lakshmi Parthasarathy, Savitha Sriram, L Ramakrishnan, Kalyani Yogesh, Karthik Sreivas, Rahul Narayanan, Saroja Subramaniam and many more. ■