

Goldsmiths Music 2016 presents:

EVENING CONCERT

Songs of the Saints: *Tamil Traditions* *and New Creativities*

THURSDAY 12 MAY 7 pm
Deptford Town Hall, Goldsmiths

FRIDAY 13 MAY 7.30 pm
London Tamil Centre, Wembley



This unique performance project builds bridges between professional Tamil musicians in London and musical creativity at Goldsmiths. Featuring new collaborative works led by the composer Francis Silkstone, the concert develops musical connections between Tamil devotional songs, Carnatic music and Western harmony and polyphony.

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Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Songs of the Saints: Tamil Traditions and New Creativities

Thursday 12th May 2016

Council Chamber, Deptford Town Hall; Goldsmiths, University of London

Friday 13th May 2016

London Tamil Centre, Wembley

Performers:

Caterina Dellabona – clarinet

Paramasamy Kirupakaran – mridangam (barrel drum) and kanjira (frame drum)

Lin Lin – flute

Ratheeshkumar Manoharan – violin

Manipallavam K. Sarangan – voice

Pete Yelding – cello

Transliterations and translations by Manipallavam K. Sarangan and Jasmine Hornabrook

Songs of the Saints: Tamil Traditions and New Creativities is the culmination of an intercultural project based around the Tamil *pannisai* songs performed in homes, concert halls and temples around Greater London. The songs were originally sung between the 7th and 12th centuries in South India and Sri Lanka by the *nayanmar* – Saiva Hindu saints who praised Siva. The *thirumurai pannisai* canon functions as an important sung 'text' of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. The songs fulfil an important ritual function during *pooja* worship in temples in South Asia and in the Tamil diaspora. In particular, *oduvars* – professional singers and custodians of the canon – sing the songs for the deities to complete the ritual, a practice that continues three times a day in London Sivan Temple, Lewisham. The songs perform an important function in the diaspora, connecting faith, place and Tamil culture across nation-state borders. The project aims to build musical bridges between a musical practice that takes place in London with Carnatic (South Indian classical) musicians, music students at Goldsmiths and composer Francis Silkstone.

Programme

1. Gnaayiree Potri
2. Kaathalaaki Kasintu, followed by Ilangkai Mannan
3. Enna Punniyam
4. Improvisation based on Raga Mohanam
5. Raga Madhuvanti Thillana

The first song has been composed by Manipallavam K. Sarangan. It is composed in the style of the *pannisai* Tamil devotional songs. The next three songs are from the *pannisai* canon and are *thevaram* songs of the saints. The first two songs and will be performed by Manipallavam K. Sarangan, Ratheeskumar Manoharan and Paramasamy Kirupakaran, in a traditional manner. This *kutcheri* concert style incorporates virtuosic improvisation in the *raga* (mode) and *talam* (rhythmic cycle). The musicians each perform a different role – Sarangan leads the ensemble through his singing, Ratheeskumar elaborates and responds to Sarangan's melodies on the violin, and Kirupakaran provides rhythmic accompaniment and elaboration.

The third song, *Enna Punniyam*, is another *thevaram* song of the saints, from the same *pannisai* canon as the first two items. However, it is performed in an experimental inter-cultural manner. Here, Sarangan and his accompanists Ratheesh and Kirupa, are joined by a trio Goldsmiths music students: Lin Lin, flute, Caterina Dellabona, clarinet, and Pete Yelding, cello, playing music written by Francis Silkstone.

Enna Punniyam was written by the *nayanmar* saint, Sampanthar, in the 7th century. Sampanthar's *thevaram* songs for *Siva* form the first three volumes of the 12-volume *thirumurai pannisai* canon. Each of the *pannisai* songs are sung about a particular place in South India and Sri Lanka, and *Enna Punniyam* is about the Valagnchuzhi Temple in the Tanjavur district of Tamil Nadu, India. The temple is situated on the banks of the Kaveri river. Like the Ganges, the Kaveri river holds particular spiritual significance in Hinduism. The *thevaram* songs are considered to have power in the world and to develop personal faith through singing and listening. These songs were originally sung in *pann* - a precursor to modern *raga* - but the *pann* are now lost. So nowadays, *Enna Punniyam* is sung in the 7-note Caranatic *Raga Panthuvrali* (which is closely related to the Hindustani Raga Puriya Dhanasri), and is set to the *adi talam* cycle (8 beats).

Sarangan sings the song in its original traditional melody, but now adapted in response to the music that Francis Silkstone has written for the Goldsmiths trio. The style of the trio music, and the way in which it relates to Sarangan's singing, varies from one line to another. In a traditional rendition, the whole poem is presented from within a single contemplative framework. Here, Silkstone's experimental setting explores contrasts between the meanings of successive couplets (and between the two lines of the second couplet).

*Enna punniyam seythanai nejname, Irungkadal vaiyaththu
Munnam neepuri nalvinai payanidai mulumani tharalangkal,
Maanu kaaveri suzhthiru valagnchuzhi
Vaananaai vaay aara
Panni aathariththu eththiyum paadiyum
Vazhipadum athanaalee.*

*What virtues did I do in my previous life to receive these blessings (punniyam) now?
Oh my heart, can you tell me?
Water surrounds the world.
Before in my previous life, I did some good actions
and everything is done.
The river Kaveri surrounds the Valagnchuzhi temple,
Tirelessly I sing for Siva - the one who lives in the space surrounding us,
Before, I was immersed in perfect praising and singing,
I continue to pray for the blessing I received.*

Improvisation based on Raga Mohanam

Raga Mohanam consists of 5 notes, and its distinct sound has made it very popular in Carnatic music, Tamil devotional songs and film songs. In this improvisation, based on *Raga Mohanam*, each musician is playing his or her own melody and rhythms in response to what they hear from the other musicians. During rehearsals, Francis Silkstone, devised an overall structure in consultation with the performers, helping each musician to take on new improvisatory roles in order to build bridges across musical styles and backgrounds.

Raga Madhuvanti Thillana

Raga Madhuvanti, is a raga borrowed from the North Indian Hindustani tradition. The raga consists of 5 notes when ascending and 7 notes when descending, and is a popular raga that evokes romantic and divine love.

Thillana is a traditional form of music for dance, typically performed at the end of a South Indian concert. This performance is based upon a *thillana* composed and performed by Manipallavam K. Sarangan before the start of this project. Sarangan's composition, in traditional *thillana* form, has three sections: *pallavi*, *anu pallavi*, and *caranam*. For the *pallavi*, Silkstone has added to Sarangan's composition by writing a cello bass-line below the voice, and complex counter melodies for flute and clarinet over the top, all within the raga *Madhuvanti*. This first section, *pallavi*, is repeated many times, in fact, many more than in a traditional performance, but with various combinations of instruments with Sarangan, and sometimes without him. Pete Yielding sometimes elaborates the written bass line, drawing upon his experience of improvised music and his learning of Hindustani *sitar*.

For the second section, *anu pallavi*, the trio play Sarangan's melody in unison with him, with some ornamentations written by Silkstone.

The third section, *caranam*, starts with lyrics written by Sarangan. Here the trio fall silent, so that this section contrasts with the rest of the performance, and so that the words are clearly intelligible to Tamil audiences. Songs in *thillana* form are usually abstract, emphasising rhythmic elements through the use of syllables with purely musical meaning, *jatis*. But Sarangan's sudden introduction of lyrics reveal that this *thillana* song is a meditation upon the Nagapooshani Temple in Nainativu, and the Goddess who resides there, in Sarangan's ancestral village, on an island in the Jaffna peninsula in Sri Lanka. Nainativu village – which Sarangan refers to by its old name of Manipallavam - was an important site for the Tamil Cola empire (300 BCE - 12th century). It was a hub for trade and for Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimage and is mentioned in a number of ancient Tamil Hindu, Jain and Buddhist epics. As is traditional in this oral tradition, the last word of these lyrics is the composer's name, 'Sarangan', so that, as the song is passed down through the generations, people will know that it was composed by Manipallavam K. Sarangan.

This (third) *caranam* section then continues with abstract vocal syllables, with the trio in unison with the voice. The performance ends with a return to the first *pallavi* section, with melodies improvised by all the performers.

*Madurai Isai, Sri Manipallava Nagarvaazhna nagabushaniee,
charana pada kamalam paninthu dinamum eethi paadum Sarangan*

*Sweet, melodious music, life is exciting in the great meeting place of Manipallava,
Worship Goddess Nagabushaniee's lotus feet, as Sarangan daily praises and sings.*

BIOGRAPHIES

CATERINA DELLABONA – clarinet

Caterina began her clarinet studies at the age of 9 in Milan, Italy, where she was born, following ABRSM examination board, under the guidance of Marco Giani. In 2012 she moved to East Sussex to complete her A-level exams in Bede's Senior School and was awarded an A in both her AS and A2 performance exams. She is currently studying Music at Goldsmiths, University of London, concentrating on clarinet with Victoria Soames Samek, and performance with Danny Driver. Caterina has played in a masterclass led by Chris Richards, and is involved in Goldsmiths Sinfonia and Goldsmiths Contemporary Music Ensemble, led by Andrew Zolinsky.

PARAMASAMY KIRUPAKARAN – mridangam (barrel drum) and kanjira (frame drum)

Sri P. Kirupakaran is an established teacher and performer of the *mridangam* in the UK. Hailing from a family of musicians in North Sri Lanka, Kirupakaran had his initial training in *mridangam* at the Annamalai Isai Thamil Manram, in Nallur, Sri Lanka. Kirupakaran has furthered his musical training with the *mridangam* maestro, Kaaraikudi R. Mani, in Chennai, India. From 2002, Kirupakaran has been a regular participant in the Chennai Music Festival. His performances as a soloist and accompanying artist have earned him many note-worthy reviews and prizes, such as the prestigious "Best Mridangam Player 2004" accolade and the title "Laya Gnana Vidthakar" in 2010. He is the founder of Avartanas – a school of *mridangam* – and teaches around Greater London. He has participated in Ruphavahini, the Sri Lankan TV broadcasting channel, Norwegian TV, the BBC and Greater London Radio. Sri Kirupakaran has accompanied an impressive list of well known musicians, including T. V. Govintharao, Rajkumar Barathy, Nithyashree Mahadevan, Sarumathy Ramachandran and A.K. Karnakaran to name a few.

LIN LIN – flute

The up and coming and multi award-winning Chinese concert musician Lin Lin is a talented and skilled performer in both flute and piano. Lin has established herself as one of the most exciting young musicians of today by giving numerous solo and chamber recitals in major concert halls throughout Europe and Asia. She has worked with many major UK orchestras as the principal flute, and recently gave the European premier of Chen Yi's *Golden Flute Concerto* as well as world premier of Sandy Clark's *Hua Mulan Sagaas* the soloist with Trinity Symphony Orchestra at London Blackheath Concert Hall. While having her concert and recording schedule, Lin is simultaneously taking the performance PhD degree in art music.

RATHEESHKUMAR MANOHARAN – violin

Born in a family of musicians, Ratheeshkumar was exposed to music and learned violin at the early age of 6. He was fortunate to perform his arangetram – debut performance ceremony - at the tender age of 10. Ratheeshkumar graduated in violin from the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, and then went to the University of Madras, India, to attain his Masters degree. Ratheeshkumar later became a research scholar in the United Kingdom. He was privileged to be a disciple of Kalaimamani A. Kanyakumari and Embar S. Kannan, both from India. Ratheeshkumar began his distinguished career as a violin artist in arangetrams and performances and he is highly acclaimed as a solo and accompanying artist. Ratheeshkumar is

the director of Shrutimanolaya School of Fine Arts, UK and teaches violin at Sangeetha of the UK and Croydon Cultural Centre.

MANIPALLAVAM K. SARANGAN – voice

Manipallavam K. Sarangan received his initial music education in the Northern Jaffna peninsula, Sri Lanka. He received advanced training in Chennai, South India, with the eminent late Prof. K. V. Narayanaswamy, whilst studying for numerous academic qualifications in music, with his BA Music at Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore and completed his MA and MPhil at Madras University. Sarangan was awarded the title 'Sangeetha Vidwan' from the Tamil Music College, Chennai. He established the Temple of Aesthetic Fine Arts and has many students. Now living in the UK, Sarangan regularly performs in London and has built a reputation as an impressive classical vocalist in Europe, Canada and South Asia. Sarangan also teaches at the London Tamil Centre and Harrow Tamil School Association. This is Sarangan's second performance at Goldsmiths.

PETE YELDING – cello

Pete composes and performs music. He will use whatever is available, when appropriate, to take part in a musical environment. Specifically he plays the cello, sings and plays sitar. He grew up playing and learning in a number of musical spaces: in European classical ensembles, rock bands, with Mandinka Griots and with Gnawa musicians. From 2008 he studied composition of European art music under Michael Wolters and Howard Skempton at Birmingham Conservatoire, where he also began his study of Hindustani music on sitar under Clem Alford. He is currently based in London, where he became active in its improvised music scene and commenced his Masters in Creative Practice at Goldsmiths. He performs regularly and his written (or devised) compositions range from solo performances to large ensemble works and interdisciplinary collaborations.

FRANCIS SILKSTONE

Francis Silkstone (born 1956) is an English composer who is developing unique and meaningful approaches to interactions between the contemporary classical music of India and Europe. His works have been performed by Ensembles including Ensemble Modern, Frankfurt, at major European festivals and venues including La Biennale di Venezia, Alte Oper Frankfurt, ISCM World New Music Festival (2006); and Kölner Philharmonie. His *Post Colonial War Requiem* (2008) was performed in Coventry Cathedral, whilst he was an AHRC Fellow in the Creative and Performing Arts, at Goldsmiths, University of London: *Intercultural Composition: Arranging Marriages Between Western and South Asian Art Music* (2007-2012). He is still co-composing with Pandits Rajan & Sajan Mishra, *At The Feet Of My Beloved*, a sacred oratorio for their voices and European instrumental ensemble. Silkstone135@gmail.com

JASMINE HORNABROOK

Jasmine is the post-doctoral research fellow for this cultural engagement project. Her PhD focused on musical learning and performance in the Tamil diaspora in London and she has been learning *pannisai* for the last three years at London Sivan Temple from her teacher, Oduvar Sami Dhandapani.

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