

Saraswathi

Teacher Resource Guide

Lotus Blossoms 2022



About Saraswathi Ranganathan

Saraswathi brings with her a legacy of firsts: She is the first Indian woman and Veena artiste to win a Chicago Music Award in its 35-year history, the first Veena artiste to perform as an orchestra member of Disney's Jungle Book production and the first Veena artiste to receive a



\$10,000 grant from the Logan Foundation in Chicago. She attributes her path-carving success to the inclusive energy in her music and in her life. Her goal? Bring artists and listeners together as one community united in music and understanding.



Carnatic Music

A system of music from ancient southern India that is systematic, scientific, artistic, and spiritual all at once. Carnatic music encompasses several thousand songs called *krithis* (*kree-tees*) by various composers in many languages: but primarily in the Southern Indian languages of Tamil (*ta-muhl*), Telugu (*teh-luh-gu*), and Kannada (*kuh-naa-duh*). Aside from these *krithis* (*kree-tees*), within Carnatic music there are many sub-genres of song-types each with their own distinct styles of presentation.

Raaga

Raaga (*Rah-gah*) is the fundamental unit of melody in Carnatic Music. It is a Sanskrit word meaning “that which makes us happy” or “that which adds color”. In other words, Raga is capable of bringing out the colors of our emotions. Carnatic Music has a melody system with 72 primary *Raagas* called *Mela Raagas* (*May-la Rah-gahs*) and over fifty thousand non-primary Ragas.

Taala

Taala (*tah-lah*) is the fundamental unit of rhythm in Carnatic Music. There are unique syllables that are specific to the *Taala* system. The recitation of these syllables is called *Konnakkol* (*kah-na-coal*). *Taalas* are counted in different cycles - with as little as three beat cycles going up to even 108 beats for just one cycle!

Cutcheri

Cutcheri (*kuh-cherry*) is a typical Carnatic music performance. Performances typically last at least 3 hours and include a combination of written compositions and extended improvisation that takes the performers and audience on a shared journey through melody and rhythm.

Veena

Veena refers to a number of plucked string instruments played in India - the instrument that you will hear in Saraswathi's performance has a history dating back to 1700 BCE! Saraswathi's veena is made out of jackfruit, has a long hollow neck as well as a large pear shaped resonator. It has four strings that are plucked - like a guitar - as well as three additional strings that vibrate while the veena is being played.



South India

Saraswathi was born in the city of Mysore located in the southwestern Indian state of Karnataka.

South India is a broad region of India that comprises roughly 20% of India's total land area and contains over 250 million people! South India includes 5 states, 4 major languages, and 8 minority languages.



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