

## **Some Frequently Asked Questions about learning Carnatic Music**

By Smitha K. Prasad

Dear readers, now that we have covered some basics of Carnatic music, I would like to take the opportunity in this month's column to answer some commonly asked questions when it comes to learning Carnatic music.

### **I want my child to learn Indian classical music- is that Carnatic music?**

There are two main forms of Indian classical music- Hindusthani music (mainly practiced in North India) and Carnatic music, which is mainly practiced in South India. Both these styles of music have many similarities and many differences with each other. The decision to learn Hindusthani or Carnatic music is one of personal choice. The best way to decide is to spend some time listening to various artistes in both these genres and seeing which appeals more to your musical sense.

### **Is Carnatic music played on an instrument or is it vocal?**

Carnatic music is a style of Indian classical music that can be vocal or instrumental. Common instruments that you will see used for Carnatic music are violin, flute and *veena*; however instruments such as the guitar, mandolin and saxophone are more recent adaptations.

Carnatic music also utilizes percussive instruments, the most common instruments being the *mridangam* (double headed drum), *ghatam* (an earthenware pot made specifically to be played as an instrument), *khanjira* (frame drum) and *morsing* (a metallic instrument).

### **In what language is Carnatic music taught?**

Carnatic music compositions are typically in Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada languages. The language of instruction can be any language that both student and teacher are comfortable with and can communicate with each other; these days with students from all parts of the world aspiring to learn Carnatic music, English is commonly used as the language of instruction.

### **How much time is my child expected to commit to learn Carnatic music?**

While the actual instruction classes may take place once or twice a week, learning Carnatic music also involves practice at home on a regular basis. Apart from this, it is imperative to listen to Carnatic music by attending concerts, lecture demonstrations or listening to recordings. The internet is a great resource and a number of websites allow you to listen to streaming music for free. In fact, listening to Carnatic music is one of the best ways to rapidly advance in ones learning. Unfortunately, the general tendency is for students to attend presentations only if they are performing. Many local organizations organize concerts and lecture demonstrations, which are free and accessible to the public- I would encourage you all to attend as many as possible even if your child is not a participant.

### **How long will it take before my child can perform Carnatic music concerts?**

Like other classical art forms, Carnatic music has to be practiced for a number of years before a student can competently perform in public. The teacher is the best judge of when a student is ready to perform in public.

Till we meet next time, please do not hesitate to ask more questions about Carnatic music- answering *rasikas*'s questions is something that I enjoy very much.

*Smitha Prasad is a Carnatic vocalist based in Cary, NC and can be reached at [smitha\\_prasad@hotmail.com](mailto:smitha_prasad@hotmail.com)*