

Exploring Carnatic Music

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Exploring Carnatic Music: Culture, Controversy, and Continuity

Context : The Supreme Court, in an interim order, stated that musician **T.M. Krishna** should not be recognized as the recipient of the **Sangita Kalanidhi M.S. Subbulakshmi Award**. Furthermore, he was restrained from presenting himself as an awardee until the Court resolves an appeal challenging the conferment of the award.

Background

- The Court's decision followed the presentation of the award to **T.M. Krishna** during the inauguration of the **98th Annual Conference and Concerts** in Chennai, an event organized by The Hindu and the Music Academy.
- The Sangita Kalanidhi Award is a prestigious honor in the realm of Carnatic music.

About Carnatic Music

Carnatic music is a classical tradition from Southern India, deeply intertwined with the region's cultural and religious heritage.

Origins and History

1. Ancient Roots:

- Traces its origins to the **Sama Veda**, which contains hymns set to musical tunes.

2. Temple Traditions:

- Played a vital role in preserving Carnatic music through performances as part of temple rituals.

3. Bhakti Movement:

- This devotional movement (6th-17th centuries) significantly influenced the development of Carnatic music by emphasizing **devotional compositions**.

4. Medieval Composers:

- **Purandaradasa** (1480-1564) systematized its methods and composed numerous devotional songs.

5. The Trinity:

- In the 18th century, **Thyagaraja**, **Shama Shastri**, and **Muthuswami Dikshitar** created compositions that are foundational to the Carnatic repertoire.
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Key Concepts in Carnatic Music

1. **Raga (Rāga):**
 - A melodic framework for improvisation and composition.
 2. **Tala (Tāla):**
 - Represents rhythmic cycles, often characterized by mathematical precision.
 3. **Bhava (Bhāva):**
 - Expresses emotions and thoughts through musical renderings.
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Instruments in Carnatic Music

1. **Vocal:**
 - The human voice is central, serving as the primary instrument.
 2. **Melody Instruments:**
 - Common instruments include the **Violin**, **Veena**, **Flute**, and **Nadaswaram**.
 3. **Percussion Instruments:**
 - Instruments like the **Mridangam**, **Ghatam**, **Kanjira**, and **Thavil** provide rhythmic support.
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Structure of Performances

1. **Kṛiti (Kṛti):**
 - A structured song comprising **Pallavi** (refrain), **Anupallavi** (second verse), and **Charanam** (final verse).
 2. **Ragam Tanam Pallavi:**
 - A highly improvisational segment that highlights the performer's expertise.
 3. **Thillana:**
 - A rhythmic and lively piece usually concluding a performance.
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Notable Composers in Carnatic Music

1. **Purandaradasa:**
 - Revered as the **father of Carnatic music**, known for standardizing musical teaching methods.
2. **The Trinity:**
 - **Thyagaraja**, **Shama Shastri**, and **Muthuswami Dikshitar** are celebrated for their timeless contributions to the Carnatic tradition.