

GAJJAI PUJA

Rebecca Busch - July 24, 2015, Legénd

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GAJJAI PUJA - consecration of the Gajjai - ,Dance Anklets'



Less than one hundred years ago South Indian Performing Arts of music and dance were a hereditary profession of ,Melakkaran' families. Several rituals marked a pupil's artistic growth. GAJJAI PUJA concluded formal training in dance by consecrating the GAJJAI ,string of bells', tying these round the girl's ankles and blessing her to dance for the first time a full scale Dance Concert called MARGAM.

Dedication to a temple ,Muttirai' could follow, or a public début called ,Arangetram' that marked the beginning of an artistic career. Since 1947 dedication to temples is no longer allowed but ,Arangetram' has become popular worldwide.

REBECCA BUSCH studied Western dance forms and classical Indian dance in America with several teachers in the Smt. T.Balasaraswati style. In 2013 she joined Paramparai's DASI ATTAM course. Three years of training resulted in her GAJJAI PUJA graduation performance.

MARGAM – Dance Concert

by Rebecca Busch

Guru: Dr. Saskia Kersenboom



- * „*Gajananam*“ invocation of Vinayaka, Lord of all beginnings
- * *Alarippu* (Tanjavur Quartet 19th Century)
 - flower salutation to all assembled (rhythm: *eka, tisra natai*)
- * *Jatisvaram* (Tanjavur Quartet 19th Century)
 - abstract dance of seven choreographies strung on the melody scale *Kalyani*, in the rhythm cycle *Rupaka*
- * *Shabdam „Kalpakamba...“* (Dr. V. Ragahavan, 1908-1979)
 - Sanskrit ode to goddess *Kalpakamba* depicting her various moods through melody (*Ragamalika/ Mishra Chapu*) and narrative mime.

* **Varnam „Camiyai alaittu vati...”** (Ponniah, *1804,
Tanjavur Quartet) – central composition in a Dance Concert



„Come, come... listen to my words...” is the repeated plea of Meenakshi to her friend „... bring back my beloved”.

Varnam literally means ‚colour’: thus, dancing a Varnam equals ‚painting’ in poetry, song and mime. In this Varnam the Tamil verse takes us to Madurai where **Shiva Sundaresvara** marries **Meenakshi** (see illustration). No ordinary groom, and no ordinary wedding... attended by all gods !

The melody scale Kamas is ideally suited for evoking the world of **Shringara ,love'**, while the rhythm in Adi Tala underlines the emotive mime. Dream along for 36 minutes.

*** *Intermission****



* *Padam „Mukattai katti...” (Ghanam Krishna Iyer, ca.1780)*

The Tamil poet wonders „Why” Shiva Tyagarajavami allows only his face to be seen, and not his full form. He mocks the god: „perhaps your foot got injured while dancing?” Yet, Raga Bhairavi sets the serious tone for his repeated question „What is your ancient secret, my Lord ?”

* *Padam „Valaputala...” (King Svati Tirunal, 1813-1847)*

„So much love...” the melody in Atana Raga moulds the eager longing for Vishnu from impatient, reminiscent and trusting into a love that is convinced of its final destiny. (Language: Telugu)

* *Javali „Saramaina matalento...”*

(King Svatि Tirunal 1813-1847) in Raga Behag, Tala Chapu,
Language: Telugu



„Why these charming words...?” scolds the-girl-in-love...
„enough, enough... Krishna... your beautiful eyes only increase my
longing! Why did you turn away when I tried to speak to you?
Revealing your primordial form... You are Shri Padmanabha
Himself...!”

* *Tillana „Tat ta tim...” (Tanjavur Quartet, 19th Century)*

A joyous finale of abstract dance in Shankarabharana Raga and
complex, brilliant rhythm patterns (Tala: tisra natai Adi)

* *Tiruppukal (Tamil Saint Arunagirinathar, 14th Century): an ardent plea for blessing concludes this GAJJA PUJA performance.*

MARGAM Ensemble

recorded in Chennai, Tamilnadu



- * **Nattuvangam** (cymbals): Shri K.Ramaiah
 - * **Vocal**: Shri M.S.Ramadass, Smt. Nandini Ramani,
Smt. M.Sarasvati
 - * **Mridangam** (drum): Shri G.Ekambaram
 - * **Venu** (Flute): Shri K.Raja, Shri P.Venkataramanan
 - * **Vina** (Lute): Smt. R.Ramani
 - * **Tanpura** (drone): Shri G.Munnusvami
- Choreography:** Shri K.Ganesha Pillai (abstract dance);
Smt. T.Balasaraswati, Smt. Nandini Ramani and Dr. Saskia
Kersenboom (mime)

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