

## ➤ Profile

Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani was born on September 11th 1945 at Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu. He is the son of Late Sri.T.Ramanatha Iyer and Smt. Pattammal. He stepped into Carnatic Music at the tender age of 3. Although he commenced with Vocal training, very soon he realized his special interest was in Percussion and switched over to Mridangam.



His Gurus were Karaikudi Sri Rangu Iyengar, Sri T R Hari hara Sharma and Sri K M Vaidyanathan .His first stage performance took place when he was 8 years old at Karaikudi. Thereafter his dedication and hard work to excel in the chosen field resulted in the Karakudi Mani

Bhani (Style) , which won the hearts of many young percussionists and others all over the World.

He was well known as "Master Mani" down south wherein he has shared stage and performed with many local artists and won many rewards and gold medals.

As a teenage musician he performed with some of the finest in the Carnatic industry. Mani progressed quickly from strength to strength and became a highly sought after Mridangist.

## ➤ Accolades

Mani proclaims one of his greatest accolades to be the instance when Sri Palghat Mani Iyer praised him in a public concert.

His flawless clarity and supreme sound quality appealed to audiences, musicians and students, both in India and world wide.

Master Mani was soon making a mark in the Carnatic world through his natural born flair and devotion to music. Master Mani received his first national award from the then President of India, Dr Radhakrishnan at the tender age of 18.

For the next 4 decades, he declined the scores of prestigious awards that were offered to him, until 1999 when he accepted the national award from Sangeeth Natak Academy . This was presented by the President of India at the time, Mr R.K Narayan.

## ➤ **Sruthi Laya – The School**

In 1989 , Sruthi Laya Seva School was started in a small room in Rangarajapuram, Chennai with 5 minutes thani avarthanam by Guru Sri Surajananda's Mridanga Naadam. With Guruji's blessings now the school has its centres at Chennai, Bangalore, Australia, London, USA, and Canada. More than 1000 students learn Mridangam through this school directly or indirectly.

He has attracted students from all corners of the world. Many of his students are fully fledged musicians. He has the inherent ability to assess a student's capability and tailor his teachings in a way so as to amplify their potential. A tribute to Guru Kaaraikkudi mani's dedication and affection to his students was demonstrated by a unique felicitation to the Maestro.

On the 12 th June 2003, the overflowing hall of Narada Gana Sabha honoured Mani with thunderous applause as he received a luxury car presented by his students to mark his golden jubilee (**50 years of service - Fifty Fest**) as a musician. Yet another landmark moment as Mani became possibly the first musician to receive such a tribute form his students.

Guru Kaaraikkudi mani has launched a gurukulam called "**Seasun Gurukulam**" off East Coast road near the seashore at Panayur Chennai. The Seasun school is situated near the seashore environment. It is, strongly emphasized that the curriculam demand high-quality academic achievement. It requires concentrated and consistent study.

The gurukulam consist of guestrooms, classroom, common kitchen and music library for learners. The intensity of the program normally consists of weekend study, daily classes, and field exercises. Several short trips are made during the year in connection with courses.

The motto behind the gurukalam is **Stay, Study** and **Shine**

**Stay** - Self-discipline is important in any endeavor of life. It's best defined as the ability to regulate ones conduct by principle and sound judgment, rather than by impulse, desire, or social custom, basically staring from keeping the time, Finishing of what being started and last but not the least respecting and value to parents and elders.

Clinically, self-discipline may be summarized in one word: obedience. To exercise

self-discipline is to avoid evil by staying within the bounds of God's law. Staying in gurukulam will also help in the development of self-discipline in their own life.

**Study** - Learners will be given rigorous practice and strenuous exercise during the tenure at gurukulam. It helps the learners to excel in their specific art.

**Shine** - Apart from hard work, smart work makes a person prolific in his career. Gurukulam not only makes learners work harder, but also makes work smarter which makes them shine in the future.

Mani's mission on teaching doesn't stop with gurukulam. He is teaching the intricacies of laya and laya-oriented subjects for the students of the University of Madras from Jan 1, 2008. He has been appointed as a Professor Emeritus in Madras University till Dec' 2008.

### ➤ **Ensemble**

Mani's inherent desire to propagate the highly sophisticated structure of South Indian Rhythm and present innovative rhythmic ideologies led him to set up the Sruthi Laya percussion ensemble. This was supported by a large orchestra. He gave importance to taalavadya concerts and released CDs namely Sruthi Laya Vol 1 and 2, Laya Chitra, Laya Priya, Pushkaram, Melodessey etc.

With these unique ensembles, the talavadya instruments and thani avartanam concerts gained respect and elevated Mridangam to a different league. This awareness gave a thrust to many contemporary artists to bring out audio and CD albums.

Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani was the pioneer in bringing Mridangam to the centre stage. He also gave a new dimension when he fused Mridangam with other traditional instruments such as Thavil and Chendai. He has presented many Lec-Dem programmes all over the world. Students and enthusiasts have greatly benefited from these.

This venture was well received by Carnatic fans and critics. Such talavadya cutcheri's (percussion ensembles) have contributed significantly in raising the profile of Indian percussion both in India and worldwide. His aptitude as a composer as well as a music director was coming to the forefront.

The one aspect of the South Indian classical music field Mani's influence had not reached was the dance field. However, recently he has extended the rhythmic

repertoire in the classical dance industry. Along with renowned Bharathanatyam dancer Smt Rajeshwari Sainath, who is Mani sir's niece and student. He has introduced new concepts (rare varnams, innovative jathi's rare thalams) in the dance field. Performed by Smt Rajeshwari Sainath, Guru has produced dance programmes that combine melody, rhythm and dance like never before.

Many would have thought it unlikely that such a pious Carnatic classicist would move into fusion music. However, his approach to fusion is methodical and produced after much research, planning together with innovative ingenuity. He believes that fusion is not just the coming together of musical instruments but the fusing of musical systems done by musicians who have sufficient expertise to produce music that is inseparable. A notable aspect of Mani's fusion is the technical perfection that is maintained with the fusion adhering to the rules of classical music at all times.

Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani has performed with many international artists like Paul Grabowsky of Australian Art Orchestra, Eero Haemmeneimi of Finland Naada group, Elio Marchesini La Scala percussionist and Livio Magnini of Italy, Paul Simon of USA and with Finland Philharmonic Orchestra. A piece called Layapriya was performed with Finland Philharmonic Orchestra which was later performed by the Battery Dance Company as a dance ballet.

The Australian Art Orchestra has adapted his Bahudari and Ranjani compositions into Jazz style and released it as "Into The Fire". The Naada group of Finland has converted the Behag composition into Jazz orchestration and released it as "UNMATCHED". It is his greatness as a percussion maestro that made Eero Haemmeneimi dedicate 4 compositions in Mani's name.

Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani's, innovative mind, with a desire to explore fresh avenues, has been responsible for the enviable slot that he occupies in the field of percussion. His latest venture titled, "Amrutham - Fusion for Freedom" is an imaginative, novel effort that has captured many fans. Apart from that, he has also collaborated with Japanese musician JOHN KAIZAN NEPTUNE to create an album named "Steps in Time". In this album, Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani has created a unique synthesis of shakuhachi and Indian percussion.

### ➤ **Winter Music Festival**

Sruthi Laya kendra Chennai run by Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani, conducting winter music festival dedicated to **Guru Surajanandha** since 1988 (22 Years). The Guru Surajananda and Gowri Manohari awards with a cash award of Rs.10,000 each are

given to eminent personalities and best performers during the festival season.

Sruthi Laya Kendra, Secunderabad center has been conducting annual music and dance festival since 1988 (10 Years). Cash award of Rs.10,000 is given to eminent personalities in the name of Sri Ganapathi Sachidananda Swamigal of Mysore.

Guru Kaaraikkudi mani doing an immense service to aged musicians by handing over each day's gate collection (Nominal entry fee for the concert) to a senior vidwan during the season. In the midst of his busy schedule, Guru Karaikkudi Mani, who conceived of this idea, is busy finding deserving veterans to collect the purse each day.

### ➤ **Mission**

Mani has still on the mission with multiplied determination and enthusiasm, of propagating the value of Rhythm in music and the role of Mridangam and the importance of rhythm in music to reach the masses worldwide and catapulting mridangam with multiplied determination and enthusiasm to more curious heights.

Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani, a veteran of fifty five years in the field of Carnatic music is not just a great performer, but a dedicated teacher too. With a zest and passion rarely found elsewhere, he has created a veritable generation of musicians and artists to sustain his style into the next millennium.

A composer of considerable acclaim, he has wowed audiences the world over with the Carnatic and jazz ensembles. To truly take Carnatic Music to masses, he has been single-handedly editing and publishing a bimonthly magazine called Layamani Layam for the past 13 years. His unique organizing skill (as exemplified by the many percussion schools he runs world-wide and the annual music festival he conducts at Chennai, India) makes for a really multi-faceted personality.

Quite interestingly though, it's not the above qualities that set him apart. His humility, down-to-earthness, dedication, discipline and honesty are what set him apart as a shining sun in this constellation of lesser stars.

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