CHAPTER 3

SALIENT FEATURES COMMON TO BOTH

INSTRUMENTS IN STRUCTURE AND APPLICATION IN

PERFORMING MUSIC

One of the basic tenets of performing music of any country, region, styles of performance, is definitely variety. Within a said parlance of the whole idea of performance the styles can be many. There is the classical, semi classical –within this vocal or instrumental or orchestra. Sometimes there is the combination of styles. There is the folk music, religious music to which the classical or semi classical belongs in our country and film music, music written for drama, dance dramas, the list is endless. The changing social scenario also plays a role in the development and mainly utility of music of the land.

In this respect the study of classical stage music has many and a vast reach. The varieties that we find in this area are again innumerable. We can list a few under this category
3.1. **Classical Music Concerts**

- Vocal
- Instrumental
- Percussion ensemble
- Orchestral (As we witness conducted in All India Radio)
- Devotional

Classical music concerts when generalised is understood to be a vocal concert. Here the role of both the Veena and Violin is varied. The Veena in current day practices is a solo Instrument. Whereas the violin is mainly an accompanying instrument. Having said these roles of all the musical instruments are ever changing. We have the solo violin concerts played by very efficient and talented artists very frequently. So much so, many violinists do away with playing pakkavadyas completely and only give solo renderings.
Figure 3.1: Vocal Veena concert

Figure 3.2: Nithyashree
The reason for the variety of uses of all the classes of musical instruments is that the application of various components of a carnatic classical music is very dynamic in nature. The application therefore is as varied as the number of instruments as well as the number concerts. By the number of concerts I mean the way in which a concert is presented. For e.g. If a composition or compositions are repeated by the same artist or a different artist on the same stage with the gap in between concerts very less still the presentation will be different from the previous one. Let us say for e.g. a Veena player has presented Raga Simhendra Madhyama and a composition of Mysore Vasudevacharya-ninne nanmmitinayya in Misra chapu tala. On the same stage let us say
a second artist presents the same kriti in vocal, there can be a lot of variety even in such a case. Reasons are many. For argumentation I will only point out one, The Veena player will not perform neraval and does swaraprastara on the pallavi which begins on the sama eduppu and the vocalist does neraval on panngendrashayana at the anupallavi portion followed by swaraprastara, which will be on the anagata eduppu which will be enjoyed by the listeners although they have already heard the same raga and the same kriti on the same day. Why is it so enjoyable? Because the nature of music when presented on two different mediums and in the two different beat patterns becomes really different from one another. Many of us have heard such contrasts on the same day during music festivals.

Veena Performances on stage although rare are not very infrequent. Till recently we got to hear a Veena concert as a solo and with the support of a Mridanga or a Ghatam. Rarely other percussion instruments like morsing or khanjari were used. But we nowadays see many of the Veena artists employing the violin as a pakkavadya in line to that of a vocal recital.
Figure 3.4: veena and violin in musical concerts
Figure 3.5: ChittiBabu

Figure 3.6: Raja Rao
In this way we are witnessing changes in every realm of performances. They are as varied as the number of occasions they are held. For the last thirty or forty years we see the violin as a pakkavadya to vocal music in general. Before that there was the harmonium and sometimes the Veena as pakkavadya in the place of the violin in vocal concerts. The whole music scene now has become a giant melting pot of ideas in permutations and combinations. This is a good development as far as the art is concerned. There are many areas in which there can be more work done and more opportunities created and the cause of music held steadfast by these efforts.

The Legendary players like Lalgudi Jayaraman or T.N.Krishnan have established the violin as a solo as well as a pakkavadya bringing the instrument a dignity and purpose. (These are only two names mentioned. There are a whole lot of other brilliant violinists who belong in this group) We also see the violin as a group presentation. Of late we have concerts with twenty five violins, A hundred violins etc. For arguments sake we can decipher this any which way we want. But the main ingredient or the hero of a concert is the carnatic classical music.
Figure 3.7: Lalgudi Jayaraman

Coming back to the subject of the common factors of both instruments the main aspects are - both belong to the stringed instrument family or the Tata vadya. The most common factor to both is that these two belong in the chordophone division of the classification of instruments. And that both these have one big difference which is that the Veena is a plucked and fretted variety
and the violin is bowed and plain fingerboard variety. But like most things about classical music, there is more than that meets the eye or in this cases the ear. Many of the stringed instruments in the bygone days used stretched strings. They were of different material ranging from grass to metal.

The most common stretched stringed instruments which are in vogue today use strings made of steel or some such hard material. Many classifications about these instruments are a known factor among the players or listeners. We have to list the varieties here so as to put the roles of the two Instruments here to perspective.

The chordophones or the stringed instruments are mainly of three varieties.

- Stringed Instrument where the strings are plucked
- Bowed Stringed Instruments
- The struck or hammered Instruments.
Some of the stringed instruments are played on open strings like the Tambura, Tuntina, Ektar and Gettuvadyam. And the rest like the Veena and Violin are played by stopping the strings. The most common aspects of Veena and violin in the realm of performance are the music. All the students at the beginning of learning music are taught the same lessons like Sarale varase, Janti Varase, Geethe, Varna, keertane and other compositional forms. The applications of the many compositions learnt are also to a large extent the same. This rule of course applies only to the melodious music. There are many other parts of this process which can run in different directions yet the music or the melody will remain constant. For e.g. when a classical music is being the main part of a concert we hear the Varnas, Keertanes, Devaranama, Daru, Tillana, Padams, and Javalis etc frequently.
Figure 3.9: 1. Tambura with wooden shell and rest. 2. Seven stringed sitar 3. Sitar

The said two Instruments, also being in the same arena present a concert in the prescribed general pattern, which is the Varna, Kriti, Raga –Tanam-Pallvi, shorter Tukdas like Ugabhoga, Viruttam, Devaranama, Tillana etc. When these same instruments
are employed in a different area such as a pakkavadya to a vocal recital, the limits are that a violin can only follow the main artist who can be a vocalist, or an instrumentalist like a flute, Veena etc as the case may be. Whereas, if these same instruments are being used in an area of back ground music then the roles of both the instruments are very same. In other words the roles played are delightfully similar. We can hear the same note patterns in a background score from both the instruments. Even if another instrument is part of this, for e.g. Flute, the music remains the connecting factor between all the instruments.

If for example background score for a Devaranama in Chittaranjani raga aditala is being recorded the following swaras can be played in between the charanas and in turns by all the melodic instruments

p,dn,dp,mg,r sr gm| p,dn,dp,|mg,rs gm||

These phrases included in the song in between the charanas or other areas like the run up or concluding parts give the vocally rendered song a beauty because of the difference in tonal quality although the notes or the raga may be the same. The quality of sound in both the instruments is very varied and distinct.
The violin generally is said to have continuity. The Veena cannot be having this attribute. But if one has heard the sounds of these instruments when rendered with good preparation and with good amplification know that both are having their own unique beauty.

3.2. Aspects of Violin Rendering - A Note\textsuperscript{11}

The south Indian violinist has mainly become an accompanist to the voice and not a soloist he plays on a lower or a higher pitch, the silver string being itself in the D sharp pitch or the G if the singer is female. So the posture caused on the bridge by the tension of the strings is lessened and the tone is lost and hence the artist is handicapped. It is this handicap, which has forced an artist to device the seven stringed violin with banjo strings(each string has next to it its octave and both are played by the same finger at the same time) so that he may not have to play above a third of the violin from its neck. Many violinists make also the mistake of thinking softness is synonymous with audibility even to the audience sitting quite near. Their inattention in general to aesthetics and its appeal to the cultured mind, is simply shocking.

\textsuperscript{11} C.S.Ayyar in a lecture at Madras Music academy
The way in which the violin is handled in the squatting posture and against the chest decreases to a large extent the volume and the tone of the violin, as the back presses against the cloth and dampens the sound. Ordinarily as the melody is sung only in two octaves, the violinist does not play in the higher reaches of the violin. The utmost he does is use up to half of the string...e the octave of the pitch of each string, by the more advanced players, the cramped posture in which a carnatic musician holds the violin does not allow reaching the higher positions of the violin. All the above said issues become irrelevant on a modern stage as the sound system takes care of most of these problems. These same problems occur in a Veena concert also if enough care is not taken by the artists and the organisers in the various areas where the requirement of the Vadya is neglected.

As the violin imported from the west and we in spite of its stay for over a hundred and thirty years in south India have and ought to take lessons from the European, as to bowing and fingering technique so far as they can serve the purpose of melody. It is no good, devising our own ways and not using the instrument to the greatest advantage.
Regarding the bowing and the right hand work, the Indian has still to learn how to use the bow, without scraping and scratching the strings which a fine ear feels so very harsh, and to use the whole bow. The tip of the thumb should rest at the base of the bow. Too much violinist experiment with positions and some may succeed in getting the full length even when holding position is not adhered to the traditional way. But it is important to understand the importance of the finger positions of a European violinist because the instrument was discovered in the current form by these Europeans and music was created in tune with the structure and technique of the said style of music.

3.3. Paris Experiment

(The problems in making of instruments and understanding sound)

While studying the structural aspects of violin I came across a study published in the “PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES”. This lately became known as the famous Paris experiment. Researchers in Paris brought together ten experienced violinists to perform on six modern violins and six made by Old Italian masters, including five by Antonio Stradivari. The musicians wore modified welder goggles to prevent instrument
identification by eye. When asked to compare and choose a violin to replace their own for a hypothetical concert tour, six of the 10 soloists selected a modern instrument. A single new violin was the most-preferred of the 12.

All the violinists asked to play were concert musicians of repute. They could easily tell in test conditions whether they liked the instruments or not,” “They couldn’t tell if they were old or new. And for me, this implies that whatever it is they’re looking for in an instrument isn’t directly related to the age or for matter, the country of origin.”

At the end of this experiment it was found that most musicians liked a said instrument which was or not the old variety built by masters of violin making like the model of Joseph Stradivarius. It is often debated among the buyers of a new instrument be it Veena or violin weather the “Nada” is good of a given instrument. Even in the regions of South India where Veena are constructed like Trichy, or Mysore there are a lot of different techniques in building a Veena. All the makers and the seekers of these Instruments are naturally only interested in the sound quality of a given Instrument. The westerners have a more scientific approach in making the violin as compared to that of Veena. This
does not mean that our jaykaras are less perfect. But ultimately the instrument is just a means of finding the perfect sound to express his or her music.

The reason I discussed this particular experiment was to demonstrate the art of making Veena or violin is not a perfected one. It is an ongoing process. The Veena players for example all have varied needs on their instruments. There are the travellers Veena, self tuning Veena, dismantalable Veena etc. I am not discussing these radically modified instruments. Built there are the minor adjustments yet very important to a performer which are achieved with the help of Veena makers.

E.g. there is one school of thought where the taara shadja is always tuned one katte less. It will stay to the shruthi closer to the kakali nishda. The argument of the makers is that while a player traverses towards the taara shadja because of the rapid movement of the left hand the string gets deflected and hence the” Tara s” will be of a higher frequency. This argument cannot always be true as many of us play the plain note which is the s without a gamaka. This is a case in point to show the shortcomings in the repairs and fretting of Veena.
As demonstrated above the Paris experiment makes a somewhat similar point. The fact that some players or they majority of the players chose a “modern” violin over the traditional Strad or other variety is proof that the players and the listeners have their ears tuned for “sound Quality’. This and other aspects in the making of instruments needs more scientific approach, and training as also improvisation in the building technique where an aspiring Veena learner as well as a performer is given the opportunity to choose a good instrument with the help of more informed makers rather than some non-informed purchases and not have to suffer a bad Instrument while learning or on stage.

When we begin to compare and classify the aspects of music we come across myriad thoughts and we try to develop our own system to improve the area of our employment. This is only good if the reasons to go on this search are a valid and informed one. The performing music courses through the time without stopping anywhere. It is like wind. We are mere observers breathing this and keeping ourselves alive with the knowledge that classical music is divine.