

Generating Practice-based Perspectives: Working with Carnatic Music

A three-day Online Workshop for Practitioners of Carnatic Music

facilitated by

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August 12, 13 and 19, 2023 | Online via Zoom

About the Workshop

The underlying rationale behind the proposed workshop is to invite practitioners of Carnatic music to share their ideas and experiences, and thereby engage with categories such as *theory, tradition, innovation, authenticity* and *experimentation*. The idea behind the engagement is to set up a basis for a practice-oriented theory for understanding the art form, practising it and disseminating it among a wider constituency. For too long, research and scholarship on Indian music has remained frozen within conventional understandings of *reform, modernity, tradition* and *nationalism*, most of which have been drawn from academic work on music but which have not necessarily made tangible sense to practitioners. The proposed workshop is intended to encourage practitioners to share their ideas and experiences in order to locate and revisit categories in their own practice of **listening, teaching** and **performing**. The workshop also hopes to take stock of the crucial role technology and new forms of mediation have played in transforming the social milieu of classical music in India and in providing it with new repositories and archives that have immense potential in taking forward the creative dimensions of music making. Reflecting on the ethics of different kinds of engagements with listening, learning and performing Carnatic music will be integral to this workshop. By inviting practitioners, teachers and performers to participate in a number of interactive sessions, the workshop hopes to flag a new set of conversations for understanding the complexity of performance and pedagogy in the contemporary moment.

The workshop will be for **two days and will have four sessions**. Each session will have the facilitators navigating the broad theme of the session and will be followed by interactions with participants around specific activities in order to ensure maximum participation. There will be a **final session after six days**, when participants will have to curate an activity of their choice that reflects on the larger mandate of the workshop.

Sessions and Themes

Day 1:

a. Engaging with categories: How have categories associated with Carnatic music, mostly theoretical, evolved over time and what meanings do these hold for scholars on the one hand and practitioners on the other? Are there any convergences?

b. Categories in Practice: How do practitioners engage with categories in their personal practice? Do we have a language that comes from within practice to make sense of the categories? How would a language arising out of practice help in grappling with creative and artistic issues that are not amenable to simplistic and conventional categorisation? Or do conventional categories retain their value?

c. Technology and Practice: How have technologies transformed individual and collective experiences of learning and performing Carnatic music? How do musicians navigate oral tradition, written sources and digital technologies in their creative practice and how does this inform their relationship to aesthetics and ethics?

Day 2:

a. Listening practices: How do we listen? How is this distributed across diverse spaces - listening during personal practice sessions, listening in a class, listening to performances for appreciation and for learning/pedagogy? What do we think of vocalisation and instrumental music? How crucial is listening as a resource? How are we taught to listen? Are there ethical implications for listening practices, or can one listen to anything at any time from anywhere?

b. Resources, Networks and Archives: Is classical music a shared practice within a network? What resources do we draw upon in developing and amplifying our creative ideas? What do we understand of music archiving especially in the context of digitisation of Carnatic music resources? How do musicians use archives to think about their craft? How do archives preserve form? Do these force practitioners to play with form? Is there an ethics to the use of archives in creative practice? How might these be related to an ethics of listening or an ethics of creative practice?

Following these sessions, after six days, there will be a final session where participants will be encouraged to curate an activity that engages with any one or several of the issues raised in the workshop. The medium of expression for the activity is entirely left to the individual participant. This can take the form of a short essay, presentation of a composition, an audio essay (like a photo essay) that could figure as listening points, sharing a personal archive or even a set of questions that arose subsequent to the workshop.