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## Rhythm & Raga

### Carnatic Musicians Are Working Different Themes Into Their Concerts

Kamini Mathai | TNN

# Numbers make good singing subjects

This December, a number of vocalists seem to be playing the number game, and with good reason too. 2012 is the year of mathematics as well as the birth centenary year of several stalwarts in the Carnatic field, and musicians are working these themes into their concerts.

The link between numbers and divinity will be the theme of vocalist Aruna Sairam's free concert for Margazhi Maha Utsav on Sunday. "Every Hindu god is connected to a colour, a number or an animal. Since this is the year of mathematics, I decided to focus on the link between gods and numbers," says Sairam. She explains that the number one represents 'ekadantam', meaning one tusk, which is associated with Ganesha. Two stands for Shiva's 'ardhanaareswarar' form in which he is represented as half-man-half woman along with Parvati. Three represents Shiva's three eyes, and so on. "I will be singing a raga, a kriti or a sloka for each digit," she says.

This year, Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society (SIFA) has chosen birth centenaries as its theme and has lined up concerts by students of legendary musicians who were born in 1912. On Wednesday, vocalist S Sowmya did a two-and-a-half hour concert to pay tribute to singer and teacher T Brmda, who died in 1966.

Some are taking it a step



“ I HAVE CHOSEN TO DO A CONCERT ON THE LINK BETWEEN GODS AND NUMERALS

Aruna Sairam | Vocalist

**ADDING UP:** Aruna Sairam will give a concert to mark the Year of Mathematics this season

further and honouring their teachers' gurus. "Madurai Mani Iyer is my paramaguru or guru's guru," says vocalist R Suryaprakash, who is performing on Friday evening. He has done more than 15 concerts across the world this year to celebrate the life of Madurai Mani Iyer, a prolific vocalist who died in 1968. "At each of my concerts I pay tribute to my guru, T V Sankaranarayan, who is Madurai Mani Iyer's nephew and disciple, as well as to Madurai

Mani Iyer. But this year, entire concerts have been themed on him," says Suryaprakash.

Two themed tribute concerts are lined up for Sunday—one to mridangam artist Palghat Mani Iyer, who died in 1981, and the other to vocalist Sripada Pinakapani, who lives and teaches in Andhra Pradesh. The Hyderabad-based Malladi Brothers are busy preparing for the three-hour concert they will give in Chennai on Sunday in honour of Pinakapani, their teacher.

"Dr Pinakapani is a living legend, who turned 100 this year," says S Niranjan Nanthagopan of SIFA. "We decided to choose the theme of 100 since so many birth centenaries fall this year."

Singers say concerts are the best way to honour influential musicians. "Every generation brings its own flavour but we cannot forget where we came from. That is why I believe in remembering my gurus in every concert," says Suryaprakash.