

## MUSIC

## Sabha hopping during Margazhi



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**New to the Margazhi scene? Here is how you crack the code to celebrating the Chennai music season**

The filter kaapi brews as *thaniyavarthanam* pours out of sabha pandal. The mridangist shakes his long tresses and gears up for his moment in the spotlight. The violinist smiles soulfully, and tunes his strings to tweak the pitch, while the vocalist sips glasses of hot water from his flask.

And, we, the uninitiated, untrained music lovers are armed with our schedules and pamphlets and are ready for Margazhi.

But, wait. How do you snag tickets? How do you make sure you don't miss the musical superstars? And, where can you grab the best *ilai sappadu*?

For those of you who are new to the Chennai Carnatic music scene, here is a one-stop guide to the season. From a kutcheri listicle to a sartorial guide, these tips by four experienced sabha hoppers will help you cruise through the December season with elan.

THE HINDU



## Sandeep Narayan

The US-based artiste made Chennai his home many years ago and has never looked back. He says, “The influx of foreign audience members in the season has been happening for as long as I have been a part of it. It adds to the buzz and it is great to know that Carnatic music has become globalised.” Here is his list of musicians one needs to look out for this season.

## Young icons

Vani Ramamurthi, Vivek Sadasivam, and Ananya Ashok.

## Senior stalwarts

TV Sankaranarayanan, Suguna Varadachari, and TN Krishnan (especially his annual Christmas concert at The Music Academy during which it has become a tradition to play ‘Jingle Bells’!)

Not to be missed: My guru, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Sudha Raghunathan and violin duo Mysore Brothers (Sri Manjunath and Sri Nagaraj)

## Five stalwarts whose CDs you should stock

Semmagudi Sri Srinivasa Iyer, Madurai Sri Mani Iyer, Sri GN Balasubramaniam, Sri MD Ramanathan, Smt ML Vasanthakumari, and Thanjavur Sri S Kalyanaraman





## Rithvik Raja

There was a time when Rithvik Raja, in his early days of learning music, would cycle around different *kutcheri mandapams* in Chennai to listen to his favourite musicians. Raja, who is a busy vocal musician now, gives us a guide to how to fruitfully spend a day, neither missing out on the best kutcheri nor the best filter kaapi in town.

**Breakfast:** Narada Gana Sabha's Podi Dosai (run by Gnanambika Caterers then, which is shifted to Vani Mahal now)

**Between 8 am and 10 am:** Morning lectures at The Music Academy

**9 am:** Listen to a senior artist

**Before lunch:** Drop by the Academy canteen for the iconic coffee

**11.45 am to 12.45 pm:** Groove to senior musician's concert again

**Lunch:** Parthasarathy Sabha, served by the iconic, legendary Mountbatten Mani Iyer and co

**7 pm:** Listen to the prime time performers in The Music Academy or Narada Gana Sabha

**Dinner:** Head to a restaurant outside the sabhas; maybe an iconic one like Karpagambal mess or New Woodlands Hotel.

### Tech it down

With YouTube and Facebook opening up, many are live streaming an entire concert these days. It helps you enjoy a kutcheri even from home. "While these help in making us less intimidated about Carnatic music, they also run the risk of cutting out the human interaction."



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**Vani Kannamurthi**

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The 28-year-old artiste is noted for her minimalist dressing sense. The girl who is in eternally in love with her *kanjeevarams* opens up about her sartorial secrets.

**Saris:** Silk, the most preferred. Especially, grandmother's vintage collections.

**Jewellery:** Temple jewellery, always. The gold nose ring is imperative.

**Accessory:** An elegant pottu, either a big round one or a vertical one.

**Blouse:** Experiment with different necks, sleeves. Personal favourites are low backs and high necks.

**For a kutcheri hopper:**

A basic ethnic kurti paired with jeans, accompanied by a pony tail, bindi and jhumki will give you that essential Margazhi look.



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### N Ravikiran

Chitravina player, N Ravikiran, thinks it is insensitive of people to take vada breaks when the mridangam artiste gets his play time. There is a history of vocal musicians losing their temper with the audience when they spot them sneaking out of the hall. So, if you do not want to invite raised eyebrows, then listen to Ravikiran's tips: Stay indoors, expand your musical horizons and eat those vadas after the concert.

Not to miss:

The morning lecture series at Music Academy. This is a great introduction for the new comers to music appreciation from an instrumental music perspective:

**By Grammy award-winning drummer** Glen Velez and his wife, Loire Cotler on Indian impact on Western rhythms

@Music Academy

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**By N Ravikiran** on melodic harmony

@Music Academy

December 24, from 9 am

An insider's guide to snagging seats

Online portals shut their doors on you during Margazhi. You can't slack off at this time. Physically go to these sabhas as early as you can, sometimes even during the crack of dawn, to grab tickets. And grit your teeth: The bigger concerts can even create sabha-style stampedes.

**The Music Academy:** Morning lectures are free and so are the concerts. For evening prime time concert tickets, one has to book in the morning by 9 am. If you are gunning for stalwarts such as Sanjay Subramanyam and Bombay Jayashree, make sure you catch up on enough sleep the previous day and park yourself at the ticket counter by at least 6 am in the morning.

Call 28112231

**Narada Gana Sabha and The Mylapore Fine Arts Club:** Tickets available a day in advance.

Call 24997755 (MFAC)

**Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, Vani Mahal:** Advance booking possible for any concert

Call 28152166

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