

A REVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC CONFERENCE THEMED “SYMBIOSIS OF ARTS AND CULTURES: NURTURING EXPRESSION, CONNECTION, AND WELL-BEING”



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Abstract

The 5th International Conference of Faculty of Music, University of the Visual & Performing Arts 2023 (ICFM-2023) was held in the Faculty of Music premises in Colombo from 22 to 23 November 2023 with the main theme ‘Symbiosis of Arts and Cultures: Nurturing Expression, Connection, and Well-being’, brought together an assembly of over a hundred scholars and researchers from India and Sri Lanka and some other countries. The conference featured nineteen sessions delving into various dimensions of the musical landscape with the hope of fostering profound discussions across diverse areas such as music education, pedagogy, musicology, ethnomusicology, performing arts, music and technology, well-being and society, interdisciplinary connections in humanities, social and library sciences, exploring performing arts (including dance, theater and beyond), intangible cultural heritage with a focus on preservation and promotion, and visual art with interdisciplinary expression. Additionally, the program explored theoretical and practical aspects of music and dance therapy. Most participants shared their latest research in person, while some presented online. This conference enriched the knowledge of the participants as well as provided a platform for presenting studies on music and allied subject-related topics. Future music symposia can also introduce a wide variety of sessions to promote and inspire future researchers.

Keywords

International Conference Faculty of Music 2023, International Conference, Faculty of Music, Music, University of the Visual & Performing Arts

A Review of the International Music Conference

From 22 to 23 November 2023, the fifth official Conference of the Faculty of Music, University of the Visual and Performing Arts was held in the faculty premises, Colombo, with the main theme “Symbiosis of Arts and Cultures: Nurturing Expression, Connection, and Well-being”, brought together an assembly of over a hundred scholars and researchers from India and Sri

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Lanka. The scholarly discourse unfolded across nineteen sessions, each delving into the dimensions of various musical landscapes. Participants engaged in profound discussions spanning music education and pedagogy, musicology, ethnomusicology and performing arts, music and technology, music, well-being, and society, interdisciplinary connections within the humanities, social and library sciences, exploring performing arts encompassing dance, theater, and beyond, intangible cultural heritage with a focus on preservation and promotion, and visual art and interdisciplinary expression. The program further explored music and dance therapy, both in theory and practice. The convergence of minds and music witnessed a blend of traditional and contemporary perspectives, with participants seamlessly navigating through online presentations while others gathered in person to unveil the latest crescendos of their research endeavors. All the online presentations were pre-recorded items and replayed by the session organizers. A keynote speech was given by Jim Sykes from the University of Pennsylvania.

The first session included 'A Study on the Impact of North Indian Music Characteristics of W. D. Amaradeva's Songs' (Sarath Kumara Liyanawatta), 'Psychotherapy and Social Communication through *Riddi Yāga Śāntikarma* of the Matara Tradition -With *Daru Nalawilla* Sequence' (Prabha Dandeniya), 'The Mathematical Representation of the *Tal* Concept' (Chanaka Peiris), 'Voice Production in Singing North Indian Khayal and Sinhala Songs' (Rashmi Sangeetha).

The second session encompassed diverse papers that addressed specific facets of music. Noteworthy presentations included 'Pedagogy in Performing Arts with Special Reference to the Corona Pandemic' by Vidhi Nagar, exploring innovative teaching approaches during challenging times. T.K. Saroja's examination of 'Musical Features of Lullabies - Importance of the Raga Perspective' delved into the musical elements within lullabies. Furthermore, T.K.L. Sujatha's research on the 'Study of Musicality in the Recitation of Religious Hymns' and Sumudu Embogama's exploration of the 'Representation of Motherhood and Mothering in Sinhala Folk Lullabies' provided insightful perspectives on the cultural and musical dimensions of these themes. Overall, the session provided a comprehensive exploration of pedagogy, musical features, and cultural representations within the performing arts.

The third session of the conference featured also music research papers. Among the presentations, 'The Influence of Music on Stress Reduction' by Anushka Madubhashinie and Buddhika Jayathisse explored the therapeutic role of music in alleviating stress. Gayesha

Dharmasri investigated the cross-cultural use of North Indian musical instruments in Sri Lankan Church Festivals, shedding light on the interplay of musical traditions. K.G.N.D. Wimalasena's 'A Socioeconomic Study of the *Parei Melam* Practitioners and Their Communities in Sri Lanka' provided a socio-economic lens on traditional Tamil music practitioners, while Mahesh Pathmakumara's 'A Study of the Importance of Jawari and the Difficulties of Maintaining It in the Daily Practice of Sitar Playing' has shown some intricacies of sitar playing techniques. U.W.A. Sithara Madushani's contribution, 'A Study of *Raganga* Classification and Its Current Practice in North Indian Classical Music,' offered insights into the contemporary application of *raganga* classification in North Indian Classical Music. This session was spanning from therapeutic applications to socio-economic studies and technical explorations in musical practice.

The fourth session of the conference shed light on distinct aspects of music education. H. M. D. S. Herath's presentation, 'Student Interest in the Subject Content of the Grade 6 Oriental Music Curriculum Implemented in Sri Lankan School Education,' examined students' engagement with the curriculum. L. C. I. Perera explored innovative pedagogical methods in 'Use of Nursery Rhymes to Develop Music Knowledge in Pre-Primary Age,' emphasizing early music education. Indika Weerakoon and Dinusha Wijenayaka's 'A Study of the Scientific Background of the Traditional Sabaragamuwa *Davula* Drum Design' provided a scientific perspective on this topic. W.M.N.K.K. Hulugalla's research on 'Positive Characteristics Reflected in the Use of Audio-Visual Learning Devices and Senses When Teaching Children with Special Needs: A Linguistic Study' addressed inclusive teaching methods. This session contributed insights to the discourse on music education, from curriculum engagement to innovative pedagogical approaches and scientific analyses of traditional instruments.

The fifth session of the conference featured an array of selected papers that delved into diverse aspects of cultural and sociological dimensions. 'A Scientific Study of the Similarities and Dissimilarities of Chinese Opera and Sanskrit *Abhijnanasakauntalam* Drama' by Pitabeddara Siri Niggrrodha Thero explored cross-cultural parallels between Chinese Opera and the Sanskrit *Abhijnanasakantalam* (*The recognition of Sakuntala*) Drama. Thavachchelvi Rasan's presentation, '*Kappat Paattu* (*Song of a Ship*) as a Living Archive: Analyzing the Role of Tradition in Preserving Societal Stories,' looked into the preservation of societal narratives through the lens of the *Kappat Paattu*. Udaya Cabral and Nimmi Deshapriya reported on a case study on 'Oral Traditional Practices Related to Paddy Cultivation and its Social Function after Three Decades,' examining the social function of preserved folk songs in the Village Nalanda

in the Matale District. Finally, H. D. Kaluarachchi and K. K. H. Pavithra explored the 'Sociology of Sound,' examining the impact of music on well-being and society in Sri Lanka. This session contributed insights into the intersections of music, tradition, and society, offering another perspective on cultural preservation and societal well-being.

The sixth session of the conference featured selected papers that dealt with indigenous songs, the impact of South Indian Poetical Theatre on some Sri Lankan theatre practices, and the use of rhythm patterns in expressing emotions. Bina Gandhi Deori presented 'Exploring the Significance of the Galo Indigenous Songs as an Intangible Cultural Heritage'. Nishshanka Abeyrathna explored 'The Influence of South Indian Poetical Theatre on Theatre Practices in Sri Lanka,' providing insights into the cross-cultural impact of South Indian theatrical traditions on Sri Lankan theatre. N. Kalubowila contributed to 'Using Rhythm Patterns in Expressing Feelings,' examining the role of rhythm patterns in conveying emotions. The selection of papers in this session does not fall under one theme, causing comparatively weaker feedback. The seventh session of the conference showcased a collection of selected papers, each providing perspectives on musical traditions. Ranjith Jayasinghe's presentation, 'A Study of the Sociological Aspects of the *Udarata Shath Pada*,' delved into the sociological dimensions of the *Udarata Shath Pada*. Nethmi Yasodya contributed to the session with 'Study of Prethapideni and Practical Concepts of Dahaatapali Pideni Shantikarma of *Usveva*,' examining the practical aspects of traditional rituals. Harsha Wickramathunga's research on 'The Influence of Hevisi Playing on the Evolution of *Sathara Wattam Sural* in the Performance of Low-country (*Pahatharata*) *Magul Bera* in *Raigam Siyane Korale*' explored the impact of *Hevisi* playing on the evolution of *Sathara Wattam Sural* in the context of Low-country *Magul Bera* performances in *Raigam Siyane Korale*. This session contributed to a scholarly discourse on sociological aspects, ritual practices, and the evolution of musical forms within cultural contexts.

The eighth session of the conference presented papers that offered insights on some aspects of music education and technological advancements. Isuru Kondasinghe's contribution, 'A Study of the Teaching Strategies of Oriental Music Teachers in the Western Province of Sri Lanka,' explored pedagogical approaches. Sampath Chandrasena spoke on digital repositories with his paper 'The Impact of Digital Repositories on Cultural Heritage Preservation and Academic Advancement in Sri Lanka,' shedding light on the intersection of technology and cultural preservation. Additionally, Vinay Kumar Pamula presented 'Automated Digital Wind Instrument using Arduino UNO Microcontroller,' introducing a technological application in

the field of musical instruments. This session provided an overview of contemporary ideas in music education and the transformative impact of digital technologies on cultural heritage and musical innovation.

The subsequent session of the conference featured papers that provided other perspectives on music. Piyananda Rupasinghe presented '*Pantheru* Dance and Its Links to *Suwisi Viwarana Nruthya Pujawa*'. Nihal Kalubowila contributed with 'An Investigation on the Change as per the Nature of Playing the Only Letter in Playing Tabla,' showing aspects of playing the tabla. Gayan Jayasinghe's paper, 'A Study of the Methods Adopted by Various Musicians in Developing the Tonal Range of Sinhala Folk Tunes (using Three Selected Musicians),' provided a study of the tonal range development in Sinhala Folk Tunes through the practices of those selected musicians. This session added valuable dimensions to the conference.

The tenth session of the conference featured papers, each offering insights into various aspects of contemporary Sri Lankan music and cultural practices. There was the paper of K. K. H. Pavithra and H. D. Kaluarachchi who presented 'The Impact of Technology on Music Stars' Cultural Influence in Contemporary Sri Lankan Society: A Sociological Study'. W. M. S. S. Wijethunga and U. W. N. Subashani explored the melodic compositions of Premasiri Kemadasa in 'A Study of Premasiri Kemadasa's Melodious Compositions Created by Playing the Sitar without Using the *Meend* Technique (From a Few Selected Compositions)'. H. L. S. De Zoysa and O. A. Y. Chamathya's paper, 'An Anthropological Study on the Pluralized Belief Inclusion in Sri Lankan Traditional Dance: With Special Reference to *Ailaya Yedeema* in *Kohomba Kankari Shanthi Karama*'. This had anthropological dimensions of belief systems in traditional dance. Lastly, Janika Pathirathne and Shalini Gunasekara explored 'Analyzing Buddhist Philosophical Concepts in Contemporary Sri Lankan Song Lyrics,' providing an analysis of the incorporation of Buddhist philosophical concepts in modern song lyrics. This session enriched the conference with a wide spectrum of studies.

The eleventh session of the conference highlighted papers that dealt with diverse facets of cultural and musical studies. Udayasiri Widanapathirana presented 'A Study of Buddhism, Sri Lankan Buddhist Culture and Music,' offering an exploration of the intricate connections between Buddhism, Sri Lankan Buddhist culture, and music. Gayani Maddumage contributed to 'An Experimental Study on the Characteristic Features of *Nawagamuwa Paththini Dewala* Procession,' conducting an experimental investigation into the characteristic features of the *Nawagamuwa Paththini Dewala* procession. Amila Damayanthi and Vajira Gunasena's paper,

'A Comparative Study of the Art of Indian Urdu and Hindi Ghazal Forms,' provided a comparative analysis of the artistic nuances within Indian Urdu and Hindi Ghazal forms. This session thus added depth to the conference by examining the interplay between Buddhism and music in the Sri Lankan context, conducting experimental studies on traditional processions, and exploring the comparative aesthetics of Ghazal forms in Indian music.

The twelfth session of the conference featured papers that explored some dimensions of musical expression within cultural traditions. Ishini Ayodya presented 'Musical Inspiration in the Singing in Puppet Drama with References to the Sri Arun Puppet Association,' delving into the musical aspects of puppet drama with a focus on the Sri Arun Puppet Association. Maheesha Dewmini's contribution, 'Motivational Music and Social Beliefs Associated with the *Halamba Nanumura* in the *Kappindummadu Shantikarma* of the Low-country Tradition,' explored the motivational musical elements and social beliefs linked to the *Halamba Nanumura* in the *Kappindummadu Shantikarma* of the Low-country tradition. D. Thilakarathna's paper, 'Modern Trends in the *Nanumura* Ritualistic Item of the *Rata Yakuma*,' provided insights into the contemporary trends within the *Nanumura* ritualistic item of the *Rata Yakuma*. This session enriched the conference with a nuanced exploration of musical inspirations in puppet drama, the motivational aspects of traditional rituals, and the evolving trends in ritualistic music within cultural practices.

The thirteenth session of the conference featured papers, each showing various perspectives on some aspects of traditional music, media influence, and cultural rituals. Lasantha Edirisinghe explored 'The Use of the *Daula* in Traditional Sabaragamu Dance and Applied Music,' shedding light on the role of the *Daula* in the context of traditional Sabaragamu dance and applied music. Ediriweera Gunasekara spoke about 'The Role of Television Media in Socializing Music as a Subject,' examining the influence of television media in shaping perceptions and attitudes toward music education. Saman Priyalal's paper, 'The Visible *Devil* Offering Concept in Local Rituals,' provided some surprising insights. This session contributed a diverse range of perspectives, encompassing traditional dance and music, the impact of media on music education, and the cultural significance of rituals within the local context.

The next session of the conference featured a selection of insightful papers that dealt with diverse aspects of folk music, theatrical design, and the psychological impact of audience perceptions on musicians. Subhendu Manna presented 'Unexplored Treasure: Folk Music of Arunachal Pradesh,' providing a comprehensive exploration of the rich but lesser-known folk

music traditions in Arunachal Pradesh in India. Abhinav Kumar Verma and Karalasingam Atputhan contributed to 'Scenography of Acting: Designing Body, Voice, and Text,' offering an in-depth examination of the design elements that shape the performance in acting, including body, voice, and text. Sanduni Amarakoon's paper, 'Exploring the Audience Perception and its Impact on Introverted Musicians,' delved into the psychological impact of audience perception, particularly focusing on its effects on introverted musicians. This fourteenth session thus added depth to the conference by exploring uncharted folk music territories, delving into the intricacies of theatrical design, and examining the psychological dynamics between performers and their audience.

The fifteenth session of the conference featured a selection of impactful papers that included health dimensions, socio-cultural history, and intangible heritage. M. J. Pavana and Vijayalakshmi Subramaniam presented 'Effect of the Modified Tomatis Method in Reducing Stress Levels among Health Professional Undergraduates,' offering insights into the potential stress-reducing benefits of the Modified Tomatis Method for health professional undergraduates. N. M. Ekanayaka conducted an 'Investigative Study of Music Practices and Socio-Cultural Background in Medieval Ceylon,' providing a scholarly exploration of music practices within the socio-cultural context of medieval Ceylon. S. M. A. P. Rathnasiri's paper, 'An Investigative Study of Ancient Traditions of *Perahera* Culture as an Intangible Heritage and Its Modern Variations,' delved into the ancient traditions of *Perahera* culture, examining its status as an intangible heritage and exploring its modern variations. This session contributed diverse perspectives on health education, socio-cultural history, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

The sixteenth session of the conference presented papers on melodies, the epistemological basis of aesthetics, and the incorporation of traditional songs in modern drama. Asith Atapattu explored 'The Influence of the Melodies of Rabindra Sangit on *Sripalee Gee*', examining the impact of Rabindra Sangit melodies on Sri Lankan music. Dilshan Manoj Rajapaksha contributed 'Epistemological Basis of Aesthetics in Buddhist Thought,' providing a scholarly exploration of the philosophical foundations of aesthetics in Buddhist thought. T. Roshen Kaweesh's paper, 'Analysis of the Incorporation of *Gami Natak* Songs and Folk Songs in Modern Drama: *Aadi Hatai Keda Haliyai* concerning Drama,' specifically analyzes the case of '*Aadi Hatai Keda Haliyai*.' This session enriched the conference with insights into the philosophical foundations of aesthetics and the integration of traditional songs in contemporary theatrical expressions.

The seventeenth session of the conference featured papers that addressed diverse aspects of music education, cultural preservation, and the challenges faced by Western choirs in Sri Lankan government schools. Pavithra Madapatha presented 'Improving Student Learning Skills through Individual and Group Piano Teaching Methods: Teachers' Perceptions,' exploring effective piano teaching methods from the perspectives of educators. Wasantha Kumara spoke about 'Barriers to Developing and Sustaining Western Choirs in Sri Lankan Government Schools'. Shashank Goswami and Selina Goswami contributed 'Confluence of Visual and Performing Arts in the Sanjhi Tradition of *Vraja*: Efforts to Preserve and Promote an Endangered Cultural Heritage,' offering an interesting study on the preservation and promotion of the endangered cultural heritage of the Sanjhi tradition in *Vraja*, where visual and performing arts converge. This session added depth to the conference.

The eighteenth session of the conference showcased papers that offered insights into the tonal settings of Sinhalese lullabies, the use of voice in *Nelum Ose*, and the operatic performing art of Premasiri Khemada. Mangalika Rajapaksha presented 'Traditional and Modern Tonal Settings of Sinhalese Lullabies: A Comparative Study', providing a comparative analysis of the tonal structures in Sinhalese lullabies across traditional and contemporary settings. T. P. Bolukandurage and Dhammika Kumari explored 'Study of the Use of Voice in *Nelum Ose*'. Indika Upamali contributed to 'Premasiri Khemada's Opera Performing Art and Use of Voice,' offering insights into the operatic performing art and vocal techniques employed by Premasiri Khemada. This session enriched the conference by examining the evolution of tonal settings in traditional and modern contexts.

The final session of the conference presented compelling highlights with papers addressing the intersection of dance culture and Sinhala Buddhist society, and the significance of rituals for social well-being. Nishadi Rathnawalee explored 'The Concept of *Gara Giri* in Association with Dance Culture and the Sinhala Buddhist Society,' shedding light on the cultural and societal implications of *Gara Giri* in dance. Muditha Ankumbura presented 'ICH for Social Well-being: A Study on the Significance of Puberty Rituals in the *Rodi* Community, Sri Lanka,' offering insights into the social significance of puberty rituals in the *Rodi* community. Palika Samanthi conducted an 'Investigative Study of the Counseling Process of the *Putana Moksham* Contained in the Kathakali Dance and the *Darunalavilla* of *Ratayakum Yaga*,' examining the counseling elements within the Kathakali dance tradition. This session contributed diverse perspectives on cultural practices, social well-being, and counseling processes within the context of dance and ritualistic traditions.

The 5th ICFM-2023 tried to transcend geographical boundaries and foster a tapestry of cultural exchange through intellectual exploration. As scholars delved into the intricacies of their chosen themes, a symphony of ideas emerged, resonating with the conference's overarching goal of nurturing expression, fostering connections, and enhancing well-being through the transformative power of music. The selected papers highlighted above exemplify the depth and breadth of the conference, showcasing a mosaic of studies ranging from the exploration of songs and their cultural significance to the impact of technology on music stars. As the conference convened scholars and practitioners, it not only advanced academic discourse but also contributed to the broader understanding and preservation of diverse musical traditions. This conference enriched the knowledge of the participants as well as provided a platform for presenting studies on music and allied subject-related topics. Future music symposia can also introduce a wide variety of sessions to promote and inspire future researchers.

References:

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