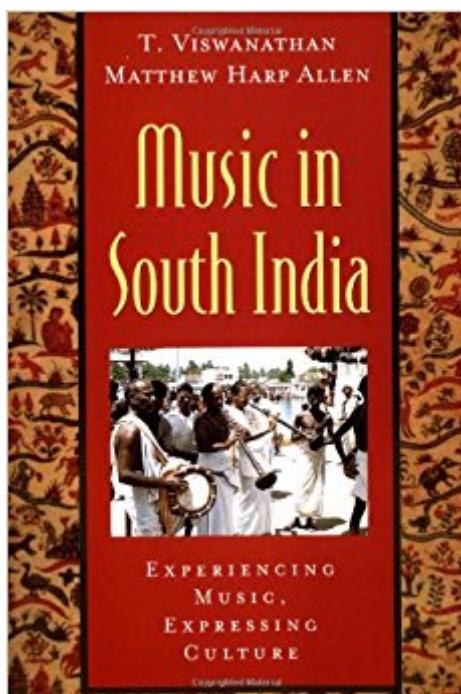


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# Music In South India: The Karnatak Concert Tradition And Beyond: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture (Global Music Series)



## **Synopsis**

Music in South India is one of several case-study volumes that can be used along with Thinking Musically, the core book in the Global Music Series. Thinking Musically incorporates music from many diverse cultures and establishes the framework for exploring the practice of music around the world. It sets the stage for an array of case-study volumes, each of which focuses on a single area of the world. Each case study uses the contemporary musical situation as a point of departure, covering historical information and traditions as they relate to the present. Visit [www.oup.com/us/globalmusic](http://www.oup.com/us/globalmusic) for a list of case studies in the Global Music Series. The website also includes instructional materials to accompany each study. Music in South India provides a vivid and focused introduction to the musical landscape of South India, discussing historical and contemporary performance, cultural history and geography, and the social organization of performance traditions. The book centers on Karnatak concert music, a unique performance practice that juxtaposes gorgeous musical compositions with many different types of improvisation. T. Viswanathan and Matthew Harp Allen first compare two types of song--bhajan, a structurally simple devotional genre, and kriti, the primary concert genre--and also analyze raga and tala, the basic elements underlying Karnatak music. They go on to examine the evolution of Karnatak music during the twentieth century, paying special attention to gender and caste and illuminating these issues through case studies and historical recordings (on the accompanying CD) of a small group of enormously influential musicians. In the final chapter, the authors move beyond Karnatak music to address other aspects of South India's rich musical environment, such as its thriving popular music scene (based on cinema music); regional traditions ranging from the sacred to the secular, many of which integrate elements from dance and drama; and contemporary composition. Featuring numerous listening activities, Music in South India is packaged with an 80-minute CD containing examples of the music discussed. The CD includes a full, uncut concert recording of a kriti performance, which shows how Karnatak musicians weave together composed and improvised elements to create extended performances.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

The late Tanjore Viswanathan was a Professor Music at Wesleyan University. Matthew Harp Allen is Assistant Professor of Music at Wheaton College.

Very interesting in-depth look at lesser-known traditions. Recommended to other music geeks!

Very helpful book. It, and its sister (Music in North India) will keep you busy! The excerpts on the CD are invaluable. You can learn a terrific amount from this book, both practical and theoretically, but be prepared to take your time if this is your first exposure.

The book is superficial to Carnatic music. It can be treated as a beginner's book to Indian music. It does not delve into details and finer aspects.

The authors are highly reputed musicologists from Wesleyan University who have written a lot on Carnatic music which is of south Indian origin. If you like Carnatic music, another book of interest to you will be Carnatic Summer or Balasaraswati: Her Art and Life. Carnatic music has a vocal component, violin, mridangam, flute, veena. The authors have explained the evolution of music and how it is played in contemporary stage now throughout the world.

This book was written by fine experts in the field of South Indian music. Co-author Tanjore Viswanathan was one of South India's greatest musicians, with a deep understanding of the underlying musical culture. The accompanying CD coordinates with the text and provides a beautiful introduction to this rich musical tradition.

This book is a short introduction to the musical traditions of South India. The authors are exceptionally well-suited for writing such a volume. Viswanathan was a highly accomplished classical musician in the Carnatic tradition of South India, who taught Western music students in Wesleyan University. Allen is also a well-known Carnatic musician and educator who teaches at Wheaton College. Together, they have written a book that explains the basics of Carnatic music theory and music culture in terms that Western students can understand. The five chapters of the book cover many types of music found in South India. The first chapter introduces the concept of song in South Indian music, with in-depth explanations of bhajans and kritis. The second chapter discusses the key elements of Carnatic theory, the raga and the tala. The third chapter explains the elements and sequencing of a Carnatic concert. The fourth chapter covers various sociological topics related to music in South India, including the differing traditional roles of women and men, recent changes in musical traditions, and musical families. The fifth chapter includes information about a variety of other topics, special features of Keralite music, cinema music, and cross-cultural collaborations. The book closes with a 5-page glossary, a selection of resources grouped by type (reading, listening, viewing, etc.), and an index. The book is amply illustrated with high quality black and white photographs of performers, instruments, and common sights of India. A very valuable part of the book is the music CD attached to the back cover. Readers who have limited familiarity with the music can listen to samples of the items being discussed rather than simply read about them. The availability of relevant samples is noted throughout the text with a CD icon. Many samples are also accompanied by exercises described in gray boxes in the text. Technical descriptions of the pieces on the CD are kept short and concise for the text; however, more detailed descriptions can be accessed through Matthew Allen's Website at Wheaton College. In order to read the additional descriptions though, you will need to have a very up-to-date version of Adobe Acrobat Reader (I have not been able to get the pages to work using Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0). It's too bad that this additional material couldn't have been included in some way on the CD, and it's also too bad it's only available in a very limited format instead of simple HTML or at least something older PDF readers can handle. I found this book to provide a very clear introduction to many aspects of Carnatic music. The sections on tala, ragas, and gamakams were particularly clear to me, even as a Western reader with a limited background in Western music theory. The explanations of kritis and the elements of a Carnatic concert were also quite well done. Some of the suggested exercises, on the other hand, seemed somewhat artificial or unrealistic, particularly for readers with no prior background in Carnatic music. After reading the book through, I also came away feeling as if something were missing. Technically, the descriptions are very nicely done, but the book doesn't

quite communicate the enormity of the role of music in South Indian culture, perhaps due to tight space constraints. In any case, the book would make a fine introduction to the theory and culture of Carnatic music for an ethnomusicology course, especially if the instructor modifies the exercises somewhat and adds supplemental readings about the role of music in the culture of South India.

A very nice book indeed. A companion book that gives the history of some of the all time greats in Carnatic music and a favorite of mine is the book by Indira Menon reviewed by me in <http://veeraam.blogspot.com/2014/10/a-good-book-on-carnatic-music-remembered.html>

If you are into this region of the world and its music, world music, ethnomusicology, or music education in general, this series is a wonderful introduction to musical cultures. My professor at college is using this for a Global Music Education class/multiculturalism in music. Great model for educators.

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