

= Ilaiyaraaja =

Ilaiyaraaja (born Gnanathesikan) is an Indian film composer who works in the South Indian cinema but predominantly in Tamil since the late 1970s . Regarded as one of the finest music composers in India , Ilaiyaraaja is also an instrumentalist , conductor , singer , and songwriter . He has composed more than 6000 songs and provided film scores for more than 1000 films , particularly being acclaimed for his background scores .

Legendary singers S. P. Balasubrahmanyam , K. S. Chithra and S. Janaki have sung more of his songs than any other singers . He integrated folk ? in Tamil ? and introduced western musical sensibilities into the South Indian musical mainstream . Ilaiyaraja is also known for creating music by fusing symphonic orchestration with traditional Indian instrumentation , often performed by Budapest Symphony Orchestra . In 1993 he organised a full symphony performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London and thus became the First Indian to compose a full symphony , with Ravi Shankar being the only other Indian to do so . He is also the first Asian to compose a full symphony performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra . He has won five Indian National Film Awards (the highest film honor in India) ; three for Best Music Direction and two for Best Background Score . In 2010 he has received Padma Bhushan , awarded by the Government of India .

In the 2000s , he composed a variety of non @-@ film music , including religious and devotional songs , an oratorio , and world music . He is usually referred to by the title Isaigani (English : Musical Genius) , or as The Maestro . Ilaiyaraja is a gold medalist in classical guitar from Trinity College of Music , London . In 2003 , according to an international poll conducted by BBC , people from 155 countries voted his composition Rakkamma Kaiya Thattu from the 1991 film Thalapathi as fourth in the world 's top 10 most popular songs of all time . He was also nominated in the Best Indian album Music Awards category at US based Just Plain Folks Music Organization , which is the largest grassroots music organization in the world , and stood third for his " Music Journey : Live in Italy " . In 2012 he received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his creative and experimental works in music field . In 2014 he has been chosen for his outstanding contribution to the Indian film music and was awarded the SIES Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswati National Eminence award . In 2015 , he was also honoured with the Centenary Award for lifetime achievement at the 46th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) at Panaji , Goa . On December 31 , 2015 , he was nominated by the Kerala Government for Nishagandi Puraskaram , the top award conferred by the Kerala Government 's Tourism Ministry , for his artistic excellence and contributions to the Indian film industry .

Popular world cinema portal Taste of Cinema placed Ilaiyaraaja at the 9th position in its list of 25 greatest film composers in the cinema history . In a poll conducted by CNN @-@ IBN celebrating 100 years of Indian cinema in 2013 , Ilaiyaraaja was voted as the greatest music composer of India with a maximum of 49 % .

= = Early life and family = =

Ilaiyaraaja was born as Gnanathesikan in 1943 in a normal middle @-@ class family in Pannaipuram , Theni district , Tamil Nadu , India . When he joined the school his father changed his name as " Rajaiya " but his village people used to call him as " Raasayya " . Ilaiyaraaja joined Dhanraj Master as a student to learn musical instruments and the master renamed and called him as just " Raaja " . In his first movie Annakili , Tamil film producer Panchu Arunachalam added " Ilaiya " (Ilaiya means younger in Tamil language) as prefix in his name Raaja and he named as " Ilaiyaraaja " because in the 1970s there was one more music director A. M. Rajah who was a popular one .

Ilaiyaraaja was married to Jeeva and the couple have three children ? Karthik Raja , Yuvaraj Shankar Raja and Bhavatharini ? all film composers and singers . His wife Jeeva died on 31 October 2011 . Ilaiyaraaja has a brother Gangai Amaran , who is also a music director and lyricist in Tamil film industry .

= = Early exposure to music = =

Ilaiyaraaja grew up in a rural area , exposed to a range of Tamil folk music . At the age of 14 , he joined a travelling musical troupe headed by his elder brother , Pavalar Varadarajan , and spent the next decade performing throughout South India . While working with the troupe , he penned his first composition , a musical adaptation of an elegy written by the Tamil poet laureate Kannadasan for Jawaharlal Nehru , India 's first prime minister . In 1968 , Ilaiyaraaja began a music course with Professor Dhanraj in Madras (now Chennai) , which included an overview of Western classical music , compositional training in techniques such as counterpoint , and study in instrumental performance . Ilaiyaraaja specialized in classical guitar and had taken a course in it at the Trinity College of Music , London .

= = Session musician and film orchestrator = =

In the 1970s in Chennai , Ilaiyaraaja played guitar in a band @-@ for @-@ hire , and worked as a session guitarist , keyboardist , and organist for film music composers and directors such as Salil Chowdhury from West Bengal . After being hired as the musical assistant to Kannada film composer G. K. Venkatesh , he worked on 200 film projects , mostly in Kannada cinema . As G. K. Venkatesh 's assistant , Ilaiyaraaja would orchestrate the melodic outlines developed by Venkatesh . During this period , Ilaiyaraaja also began writing his own scores . To hear his compositions , he would persuade Venkatesh 's session musicians to play excerpts from his scores during their break times .

= = Film composer = =

In 1975 , film producer Panchu Arunachalam commissioned him to compose the songs and film score for a Tamil @-@ language film called Annakkili (' The Parrot ') . For the soundtrack , Ilaiyaraaja applied the techniques of modern popular film music orchestration to Tamil folk poetry and folk song melodies , which created a fusion of Western and Tamil idioms . Ilaiyaraaja 's use of Tamil music in his film scores injected new influence into the Indian film score milieu . By the mid @-@ 1980s Ilaiyaraaja was gaining increasing stature as a film composer and music director in the South Indian film industry . He has worked with Indian poets and lyricists such as Kannadasan , Vaali , Vairamuthu , O. N. V. Kurup , Sreekumaran Thampi , Veturi Sundararama Murthy , Acharya Aatreya , Sirivennela Sitaramasastri , Chi . Udaya Shankar and Gulzar and is well known for his association with film makers such as Bharathiraja , S. P. Muthuraman , J. Mahendran , Balu Mahendra , K. Balachander , Mani Ratnam , Sathyan Anthikad , Priyadarshan , Fazil , Vamsy , K. Vishwanath , Singeetam Srinivasa Rao and R. Balki .

= = = Impact and musical style = = =

Ilaiyaraaja was one of the earliest Indian film composers to use Western classical music harmonies and string arrangements in Indian film music . This allowed him to craft a rich tapestry of sounds for films , and his themes and background score gained notice and appreciation among Indian film audiences . The range of expressive possibilities in Indian film music was broadened by Ilaiyaraaja 's methodical approach to arranging , recording technique , and his drawing of ideas from a diversity of musical styles .

According to musicologist P. Greene , Ilaiyaraaja 's " deep understanding of so many different styles of music allowed him to create syncretic pieces of music combining very different musical idioms in unified , coherent musical statements " . Ilaiyaraaja has composed Indian film songs that amalgamated elements of genres such as Afro @-@ tribal , bossa nova , dance music (e.g. , disco) , doo @-@ wop , flamenco , acoustic guitar @-@ propelled Western folk , funk , Indian classical , Indian folk / traditional , jazz , march , pathos , pop , psychedelia and rock and roll .

By virtue of this variety and his interfusion of Western , Indian folk and Carnatic elements ,

Ilaiyaraaja 's compositions appeal to the Indian rural dweller for its rhythmic folk qualities , the Indian classical music enthusiast for the employment of Carnatic Ragas , and the urbanite for its modern , Western @-@ music sound . Ilaiyaraaja 's sense of visualization for composing music is always to match up with the storyline of the running movie and possibly by doing so , he creates the best experience for the audience to feel the emotions flavored through his musical score . He mastered this art of blending music to the narration , which very few others managed to adapt themselves over a longer time .

Although Ilaiyaraaja uses a range of complex compositional techniques , he often sketches out the basic melodic ideas for films in a very spontaneous fashion .

= = Musical characteristics = =

Ilaiyaraaja 's music is characterised by the use of an orchestration technique that is a synthesis of Western and Indian instruments and musical modes . He uses electronic music technology that integrates synthesizers , electric guitars and keyboards , drum machines , rhythm boxes and MIDI with large orchestras that feature traditional instruments such as the veena , venu , nadaswaram , dholak , mridangam and tabla as well as Western lead instruments such as saxophones and flutes .

The basslines in his songs tend to be melodically dynamic , rising and falling in a dramatic fashion . Polyrhythms are also apparent , particularly in songs with Indian folk or Carnatic influences . The melodic structure of his songs demand considerable vocal virtuosity , and have found expressive platform amongst some of India 's respected vocalists and playback singers , such as Rajkumar , T. M. Soundararajan , K. J. Yesudas , S. P. Balasubrahmanyam , S. Janaki , P. Susheela , Asha Bhosle , Lata Mangeshkar , Jayachandran , S. P. Sailaja , Jency , Swarnalatha , K. S. Chithra , Minmini , Sujatha , Malaysia Vasudevan , Kavita Krishnamurthy , Hariharan , Udit Narayan , Sadhana Sargam and Shreya Ghoshal . Ilaiyaraaja has sung over 400 of his own compositions for films , and is recognisable by his stark , deep voice . He has penned the lyrics for some of his songs in Tamil .

= = Non @-@ cinematic output = =

Ilaiyaraaja 's first two non @-@ film albums were explorations in the fusion of Indian and Western classical music . The first , How to Name It ? (1986) , is dedicated to the Carnatic master Tyagaraja and to J. S. Bach . It features a fusion of the Carnatic form and ragas with Bach partitas , fugues and Baroque musical textures . The second , Nothing But Wind (1988) , was performed by flutist Hariprasad Chaurasia and a 50 @-@ piece orchestra and takes the conceptual approach suggested in the title ? that music is a natural phenomenon akin to various forms of air currents (e.g. , the wind , breeze , tempest etc .) .

He has composed a set of Carnatic kritis that was recorded by electric mandolinist U. Srinivas for the album Ilaiyaraaja 's Classics on the Mandolin (1994) . Ilaiyaraaja has also composed albums of religious / devotional songs . His Guru Ramana Geetam (2004) is a cycle of prayer songs inspired by the Hindu mystic Ramana Maharshi , and his Thiruvvasakam : A crossover (2005) is an oratorio of ancient Tamil poems transcribed partially in English by American lyricist Stephen Schwartz and performed by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra . Ilaiyaraaja 's most recent release is a world music @-@ oriented album called The Music Messiah (2006) .

= = Notable works = =

Ilaiyaraaja 's composition " Rakkama Kaiya Thattu " , sung by SPB , Swarnalatha in the movie Thalapatthi (1991) , was among the songs listed in a BBC World Top Ten music poll . The soundtrack of My Dear Kuttichathan , the first stereoscopic 3D film made in India is composed by him . He composed the music for Nayagan (1987) , an Indian film ranked by TIME Magazine as one of the all @-@ time 100 best movies , a number of India 's official entries to the Oscars , such as Swathi Muthyam (1986) , Nayagan (1987) , Thevar Magan (1992) , Anjali (1991) , Guru (

1997) and Hey Ram (2000) , and for Indian art films such as Adoor Gopalakrishnan 's FIPRESCI Prize @-@ winning Nizhalkuthu (' The Shadow Kill ') (2002) . Ilaiyaraaja has composed music for events such as the 1996 Miss World beauty pageant that was held in Bangalore , India , and for a documentary called India 24 Hours (1996) .

The Black Eyed Peas sampled the Ilaiyaraaja composition " Unakkum Ennakum " from Sri Raghavendra (1985) , for the song " The Elephunk Theme " on Elephunk (2003) . The alternative artist M.I.A. sampled " Kaatukuyilu " from the film Thalapathi (1991) for her song " Bamboo Banga " on the album Kala (2007) . As well , Gonjasufi sampled " Yeh Hawa Yeh Fiza " from the movie Sadma .

= = Live performances = =

Ilaiyaraaja rarely performs his music live . His last major live performance , the first in 25 years , was a four @-@ hour concert held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Chennai , India on 16 October 2005 . He performed in 2004 in Italy at the Teatro Comunale di Modena , an event @-@ concert presented for the 14th edition of Angelica , Festival Internazionale Di Musica , co @-@ produced with the L 'Altro Suono Festival .

On 23 October 2005 , " A Time For Heroes " , sponsored by different agencies including the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation , saw Hollywood star Richard Gere , Tamil and Telugu stars converging on the city for an evening of " infotainment " - they spoke in one voice on HIV / AIDS . The event organized at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium , Hyderabad , on Saturday , 22nd October 2005 , took off with Maestro Ilaiyaraaja 's composition rendered by singer Usha Uthup .

A television retrospective titled Ithu Ilaiyaraja (' This is Ilaiyaraja ') was produced , chronicling his career . He last performed live at the audio release function of Dhoni film and before that he performed a programme that was conducted and telecasted by Jaya TV titled Enrendrum Raja (' Everlasting Raja ') on 28 December 2011 at Jahawarlal Nehru Indoor Stadium , Chennai . On 23 September 2012 , he performed live in Bangalore at National High School Grounds . On February 16 , 2013 , Ilayaraja made his first appearance in North America performing at the Rogers Centre in Toronto , Canada . The Toronto concert was promoted by Trinity Events for Vijay TV in India and produced by Sandy Audio Visual SAV Productions with PA + . Following his show at Toronto Ilaiyaraaja also performed at the Prudential Center Newark , New Jersey on February 23 , 2013 and at the HP Pavilion at San Jose on March 1 , 2013 . After his Northern America tour he made a live performance at The O2 Arena in London on August 24 , 2013 , along with Kamal Haasan and his sons Yuvan Shankar Raja and Karthik Raja .

= = Ilaiyaraaja discography = =