

Nirmala Rajasekar
presents

ਲਵਾਇਰਦ

The Music of Friendship



1. **Mary O'Neil** 5:23
Turlough O' Carolan
2. **Mallari: Temple Processional** 4:31
Thanjavur K. Murugaboopathi &
Nirmala Rajasekar
3. **Pentatonic - New Beginnings** 10:02
Nirmala Rajasekar
4. **Prism** 6:03
Pat O' Keefe
5. **Vaasanthi - The Quest** 4:27
Nirmala Rajasekar
6. **Maithree - The Music of Friendship** 2:29
Lyrics by H.H. Chandrasekharendra Saraswati
Music by Vasant Desai
7. **Nihavent Oyun Havası** 8:03
Haydar Tatlıyay
8. **Sublime Journey** 5:21
Nirmala Rajasekar &
Thanjavur K. Murugaboopathi
9. **Nanati Baduku** 6:05
Sri Annamacharya
10. **Ted's Dream** 5:02
Michelle Kinney &
Peter Linman

–57:28–



MAITHREE

Nirmala Rajasekar, veena, voice

Thanjavur K. Murugaboopathi, mridangam, ghatam, khanjira

Michelle Kinney, cello

Pat O'Keefe, clarinet, alto saxophone, cowbell

Tim O'Keefe, bongos, frame drums, bendr, daff, riqq



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Nirmala Rajasekar is one of the best known Saraswathi veena players and vocalists in the world today. A dynamic and vibrant artist, she has been performing for nearly four decades all over the world. nirmalarajasekar.com



Murugaboopathi aka Boopathi is one of the world's most celebrated mridangam players. He had the unique honor of living with his Guru Tanjore Upendren and learning in the age old tradition of 'Gurukula'. sangeetmela.org/artists/murugaboopathi-mridangam/



Michelle Kinney, cellist and composer, is a dedicated and lifelong improviser, who has passionately pursued non-traditional contexts for the cello. michellekinneymusic.com



Pat O'Keefe is a multifaceted performer who is active in a wide variety of musical genres. He is currently the woodwind player for the new music ensemble **Zeitgeist**, and has studied Brazilian, Turkish, and Korean music. patokeefe.org



Tim O'Keefe has been a mainstay of the World Music scene in the Upper Midwest for over thirty years. He has performed with world renowned artists including Simon Shaheen and has co-founded ensembles including **Robayat**, **Amwaaj**, **Batucada do Norte**, **Choro Borealis**.

THESE ARE MORE THAN JUST
SONGS
THEY ARE A RHYTHMIC, MELODIC
& HARMONIC CONVERGENCE OF
MANY DIVERSE SOULS & SPIRITS
INTO ONE
EXPRESSIVE CREATION.

WHAT COMES FROM THE HEART
REACHES THE HEART.
THE MAITHREE
EXPERIENCE MADE OUR HEARTS
BEAT
TOGETHER AS ONE IN
THE UNIVERSAL
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC

— Gary Hines
(Sounds of Blackness)

My warmest greetings to you! It is with great joy that I invite you to join us on this very special journey of many cultures and the bonds of love that ties us all together. 'Maithree - the Music of Friendship' is a testament to what music means to me and my colleagues on this album. It is a bridge that facilitates greater understanding and appreciation of one other.

Come! Let us celebrate the world through the kaleidoscopic lens of music.

– Nirmala Rajasekar

It is an honor and a gift to play this music with Maithree. Through these friendships I have enjoyed a profoundly fruitful cross-cultural collaboration, and I am constantly amazed and inspired by the incredible musicianship in this band. I am very grateful to the universe for landing me as a body in motion orbiting around the luminary Nirmala, with the special people she has drawn close for this project.

– Michelle Kinney

The Maithree project is one of my favorite ensembles to play in because it brings together many of my musical interests in one place: new music created collaboratively, improvisation, and a focus on music from cultures outside of my own. But the thing that really makes this music come to life is the friendship and bond between the incredible people that I am honored to share the stage with: Tim, Michelle, Boopathi, and our founder and guide Nirmala. I am truly blessed.

– Pat O'Keefe

What an incredible opportunity to work with such top notch musicians and beautiful spirits as the collaborators of the Maithree ensemble. Incredible range of musical background and ideas that keeps the music always fresh and exciting. It inspires me every time we get together and leaves me wanting more. I feel ever so lucky and honored to be a part of Maithree.

– Tim O'Keefe

Maithree is a wonderful concept by Veena maestro Nirmala Rajasekar. It is a collaboration of world music and friendship. All the songs in this album have their unique beauty. All the musicians have worked very hard, sincerely and passionately. They have introduced their own compositions and music here. I am amazed by the musicianship of these artists and feel very grateful be part of Maithree. I convey my sincere thanks to Vidhushi Nirmala Rajasekar for including me in this project. My thanks to Innova Recordings for publishing Maithree.

- K. Murugaboopathi

1. **Mary O'Neil**, also known as **O'Carolan's Favorite Jig** was composed in the late 1600s by the prolific Irish composer Turlough O'Carolan. Though it is a well-worn traditional Irish tune, it came to life in unexpected and exciting ways in the hands of the Maithree musicians who added depth with layers of percussion and improvised solos. The ancient voice of the veena deepened the emotional impact of the tune. The relatively static harmony almost implies a drone, allowing for the veena, the cello, and the clarinet to highlight the common ground between the Irish and Indian musical traditions, while keeping true to the integrity of the tune.

2. **Mallari: Temple Processional** was specially written for clarinet, veena, and mridangam. A traditional "mallari" is typically played on the ancient South Indian reed instrument (Nadhaswaram, aka Nagaswaram) and drum (Thavil) while the artists circle around the temple through the night. They would leave the doors of the temple at about 9pm playing the piece's first movement, go around the entire temple campus (which could be several miles sometimes) and circle back in the early hours of the morning (about 5am) after playing music the whole time. All through the night the Mallari would be heard reverberating in the night air.

This piece, composed in the raga Gambira Nattai by Boopathi and Nirmala, undergoes three rhythmic stages—a preliminary speed, its this-

ram (three-beat) version, and a climactic double speed. The strict adherence of the melodic instruments to the composed line, as prescribed by the format, provides space for the mridangam to flourish and command the listener's ear in its rhythmic improvisations.

3. **Pentatonic - New Beginnings** first came into being when Nirmala composed the piece for her duo "Namaste/Sláinte" with Michelle. It was soon adapted by their trio "Butterfly" with Chinese pipa maestro Gao Hong. It has now grown to be a piece for the five players of Maithree. Pentatonic has been set in the five-note raga Suddha Saveri and the five-beat tala Kanda Chapu. With its Maithree induction, Pentatonic has reached its apex of fives—this reincarnation is "New Beginnings."

4. **Prism** is based on the raga Amruthavarshini, which means Raining Nectar, and is a blending of East and West. In this piece Pat combines South Indian melodic elements with European-style counterpoint. In Pat's words, "The title reflects this process, as the raga is refracted and diffused through my Western viewpoint."

5. **Vaasanthi - The Quest** musically articulates the search for the perfect tone... the perfect sound... the perfect phrase. Nirmala composed this piece in the raga Vaasanthi and the slow rhythmic cycle of seven beats, Misra Chapu. The players have added improvised layers to the quest.

6. **Maithree - The Music of Friendship – Maithreem Bhajatha** – was premiered at the United Nations, New York City in 1966 by the evergreen queen of Carnatic music, Smt. M.S. Subhalakshmi. This piece was specially written and composed for the performance by H.H. Chandrashekara Saraswathi and veteran music director Sri Vasant Desai; its message is one of world peace and friendship across borders.

7. **Nihavent Oyun Havası** is a beautiful melody originating in Turkey, composed by Haydar Tatlıyay. The title itself is merely factual. Oyun Havası refers to a type of instrumental folk dance music, and Nihavent is a type of Turkish makam, or melodic mode, so the title simply translates to “folk dance in the Nihavent mode.”

8. **Sublime Journey** has been created by Nirmala based on life's unpredictable path. Composed in a garland of three ragas with intricate rhythms, it is a challenging piece for collaboration at many levels. Raga changes, rhythmic complexities, mood and melody variations call for the complete synchronization of the performers.

9. **Nanati Baduku** –This traditional fifteenth-century century poem by Sri Annamacharya has been tuned in raga Revathi by Nedanuri Sri Krishnamurthy. In this special arrangement, the voice, veena and mridangam follow the traditional ver-

sion while the cello and clarinet parts are new and unique; together, they create a mesmerizing soundscape that captures the poet's sentiments: “All the world is a stage and we are merely players.” It is as though Time is smirking at our missteps.

10. Michelle says, “**Ted's Dream** was composed in collaboration with my friend Peter Linman after a life changing trip to India, and the influence is apparent. Maithree's take on this piece is energetic and layered with passionate melody and solo interpretations. Nirmala's arresting voice at the end is a delightful new addition. For me this tune invokes the memory of young love lost that forever remains in one's heart.”



Acknowledgements

Producer: Nirmala Rajasekar

Associate Producers: Gary Hines, Shruthi Rajasekar, V. Srinivasan

Recorded and mastered by Steve Kaul at Wild Sound Studios, May-June, 2016

It is my honor to work with my dear friends and musical maestros Thanjavur K. Murugaboopathi, Michelle Kinney, Pat O'Keefe, and Tim O'Keefe. I am grateful to them for their virtuosic brilliance, their passion for this project, their belief in me, and their personal support and love that made this album happen. My eternal gratitude to dear friend Steve Kaul for the many insightful ideas and innumerable hours spent in making this album.

A huge thank you to Grammy award winner Gary Hines for his guidance. Shruthi Rajasekar, your maturity, sharp listening skills, and keen musical instincts always amaze me. My gratitude to V. Srinivasan for being the voice of reason in our lives. To Padma Wudali and Vidya Suresh, you help me in so many ways; thank you.

I cannot thank enough my parents Shri Janakiraman and Smt. Chandra, my Gurus, my husband Raj, son Neeraj, daughter Shruthi, our school Naadharasa Center for Music family, and our dear dog Sarabi for making my life what it is, and helping me strive for excellence in spreading the message of love and music.

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It is a pleasure to work with Innova Recordings in the production of **Maithree**, our third project together after **Song of the Veena** and **Into the Raga**.

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