

## Prince Rama Varma in New Jersey 2017



Aswathi Thirunal Rama Varma, popularly known as Prince Rama Varma, is a South Indian classical musician. He is a Carnatic Vocalist as well as an exponent of the Veena. He is also recognized as a music teacher, musicologist, writer and orator. He has given concerts and conducted music workshops all over India and in several other countries as well. Videos of his concerts, classes and lecdems, uploaded on the Youtube channel

“Musiquebox”, are popular among music lovers, music students and professional musicians alike and have exceeded 6 million views!

### As a performing artiste

Varmaji is recognized for his pioneering efforts to make classical music in its purest form appealing to the masses, by explaining the lyrics and background of every song during his concerts. His renditions are marked by purity of notes and clarity in enunciation of lyrics in any language, ranging from his native Malayalam to Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, Hindi and even French, which he speaks fluently. His performance with his eminent accompanists is so unparalleled that one has to watch his concerts to believe and appreciate the synergy! Vinuji on the violin faithfully follows Varmaji’s voice like a shadow, whereas Mridangam Harikumarji and Ghatam Karthickji’s accompaniment is so apt, and there is so much give-and-take between the percussionists even during tani avarthanam. Varmaji always gives equal importance to his accompanists, and everybody performs as one entity instead of having a sense of competition at any point during their performance. The focus of his performance always is to educate, entertain and elevate the audience to a different world. We in New Jersey are so lucky to have him and his favorite team of accompanists performing this year during June 2017.

### As a Guru

In fact, I would say we are doubly lucky because apart from his concert, Prince Rama Varmaji has also agreed to conduct a music workshop which is his hallmark as an amazing Guru. After watching so many of his teaching videos on YouTube

“Musiquebox” channel, which he has generously shared with public, I wanted to attend his camps in person at least once. Fortunately, I got opportunities to experience his camps in India not once but three times since last year – and I still want to attend many more of his sessions! I have seen people of every age group, from 6 to 60 year olds, enjoying his camps. He teaches compositions of the Trinity, Annamacharya, his own ancestor Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, his own guru Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna, as well as compositions of lesser known composers such as Etila Ramadasa, Kaiwara Amara Nareyana, Prayaga Rangadasa and Mallekonda Ramadasa along with swaram exercises in the respective ragams. I just love the way he teaches those swaram patterns like making a beautiful garland. Without holding back, he teaches every little nuance. With so much patience, he repeats every phrase and makes us sing it again and again until everybody gets it. Even the hardest thillana becomes so much easier to learn because of his unique teaching method. Being a great orator with a good sense of humor and a very down-to-earth personality, Varmaji ensures that his classes are lively and interactive. He taught Indian music at the Rotterdam Conservatory, Codarts for many years. The Sri Venkateswara Bhakti Channel (SVBC) telecast over 200 episodes of his music lessons held at Hyderabad and at Perla, a small village in North Kerala. Varmaji attempts to transcend language barriers in music through his workshops by teaching, for instance, Rabindra Sangeet to Kannada-speaking students and Malayalam compositions to students in Andhra Pradesh.

#### As an organizer of Music Festivals

Being a worthy descendent of Maharaja Swathi Tirunal, Prince Rama Varma organizes the Swathi Sangeethotsavam, a 10-day annual festival held at the Kuthira Malika in Thiruvananthapuram from 4th to 13th January. The festival, dedicated exclusively to the compositions of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, features maestros of Carnatic and Hindustani music, and attracts music aficionados from all over the globe. I am eagerly looking forward to attend this festival myself one day. Varmaji also organizes the annual Navarathri Mandapam concerts held in Trivandrum in connection with the Navarathri Festival. In 2006, he got veteran vocalist Smt. Parassala Ponnammal to perform there and permitted women to attend the concerts, thus breaking a 300-year-old tradition of not allowing women inside the mandapam. I was blessed to witness these concerts in the

divine ambience, with oil lamps, flowers and the vibration of amazing music, for the second consecutive time this year.

Prince Rama Varma Sir is doing this much-awaited US – Canada tour after a gap of 7 years. I hope you won't miss out on this opportunity to attend both Varmaji's music camps and concerts this April, May and June 2017.

*Ramya Belavadi*  
New Jersey

April 22, 23 - Workshop - San Jose - [www.sankritilaya.org](http://www.sankritilaya.org)

April 27 - Workshop and April 29 concert - Phoenix - [www.azfinearts.org](http://www.azfinearts.org)

April 30 - Concert at San Jose - [www.sankritilaya.org](http://www.sankritilaya.org)

May 2nd - Concert at Pittsburgh - <http://www.cmu.edu/> contact: [spicmacay.cmu@gmail.com](mailto:spicmacay.cmu@gmail.com)

May 4th Workshop and  
May 6th Concert at Washington DC - <https://www.ssvt.org/>

May 7th - Concert at Dallas - [www.ifaadfw.org](http://www.ifaadfw.org)

May 11th Workshop and  
May 13th concert at Denver - <http://coloradofinearts.org>

May 14th - Concert at St.Louis - [www.sangeetha.org](http://www.sangeetha.org)

May 20 - Concert at Detroit - [www.glacmichigan.com](http://www.glacmichigan.com)

May 28 - Concert at Chicago - <http://chicagotyagarajautsavam.org/>

June 1st Workshop and  
June 3rd concert at Seattle - <http://www.abhinayfinearts.org/>

June 4th - Concert at Edmonton Ragamala Society, Canada - <http://www.edmontonragamala.ab.ca/>

June 7 and 8 - Workshop at Monroe, New Jersey  
June 10th – Concert at New Jersey @ Sri Guruvayurappan Temple - <https://billetebox.com/PrinceRamaVarma/>

June 11th concert and 13th Workshop at Kansas.