



CENTER FOR WORLD MUSIC

AND RELATED ARTS



K. V. Narayanaswamy

K. V. Narayanaswamy taught and performed Carnatic vocal music for the Center for World Music from 1984 to 1985. Affectionately known around the globe as “KVN,” he was a distinguished Indian musician, widely considered to be among the finest South Indian vocalists of the 20th century. He was born into a family of illustrious musicians and artists in Palghat, Kerala—a district renowned for its cultural and musical traditions.

While a professor of music at Wesleyan University between 1965–67, KVN engaged in a coast-to-coast concert tour of the United States. He was one of four artists—along with Bismillah Khan, Ali Akbar Khan, and Ravi Shankar—who participated in the hugely popular Hollywood Bowl music festival in Los Angeles in the summer of 1967. In 1974 he taught in Berkeley, California in the company of the famous Bharatanatyam dancer Balasaraswati and the sitar virtuoso Nikhil Banerjee. Invited by the American Society of Eastern Arts (later known as the Center for World Music), he traveled throughout North America, Europe (Berlin Music Festival in 1976), and Australia (Adelaide Arts Festival in 1988) multiple times on various concert tours. He also joined the Music College in Madras as a lecturer in 1962, retiring as Professor of Music in 1982. In 1984, KVN became the first Indian musician to be awarded the Fulbright Scholarship to teach and perform in the United States.

In India, recognition for his distinguished career includes the President of India’s Padma Shri Award (1976), the national Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1976), the Madras Music Academy’s Sangita Kalanidhi Award (1986), and the Indian Fine Arts Society’s Sangeetha Kalasikhamani Award (1989).