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Mandolin U Srinivas was a child prodigy with a rare combination of knowledge and innovation. Traditional, but still extremely creative, with his soft enchanting eyes and an ever smiling face, Srinivas would captivate audiences of all ages.

He was one of the few instrumentalists much favoured in Chennai sabhas, where traditional rasikas normally prefer vocalists. Who was not moved by his rendition of 'ragasudha rasa', Bharati's 'Chinnanchiru kiliye', 'raghunandana' and 'O Raghava'.

Born in 1969 at Palakol in Andhra Pradesh, Srinivas reportedly 'fiddled' with his father Satyanarayana's mandolin when he was all of five years old. He was only 9 years old when he performed in public, and captivated the audience with his style, flourish and grammatical purity of raga and laya.

He toured the world, often playing with musical giants like Zakir

Hussain.

He was conferred with the Padma Sri in 1998 and the Sangeet Natak Academy award in 2010. There is even a school in his name - Srinivas Institute of World Music.

However, recently, his divorce from U Sree, an IAS officer's daughter, made bigger headlines than his music.

Married in 1994, the couple had been living separately for 16 years before the divorce case, which went all the way to the Supreme Court, finally ended in 2012.

The case attracted attention, as Srinivas had to prove in court that his wife had inflicted mental cruelty on him - the cause for the divorce.

The Supreme Court agreed that Srinivas had indeed suffered cruelty and granted the divorce, though it made him pay alimony of Rs 50 Lakhs for the livelihood of his wife and son.

Music lovers reacted in disbelief when news broke on September 19, 2014 that he had passed away at a private hospital in Chennai after a failed liver transplant. His exact condition and other details of the case are unknown.

He was 45 years old.

The music fraternity, ranging from AR Rahman and Sudha Raghunathan, to playback singers Suchitra Karthik and Srinivas, were quick to take to social networking sites to share their sorrow and grief.

Sudha Raghunathan's post was straight from the heart, when she posted, "Am in a state of disbelief!" on Facebook.

Character actor and film lecturer Mohan Raman, in his tribute also referred to Srinivas' devotion to Sai Baba, when he said, "RIP - Mandolin U Srinivas. 45 is far too young to go my friend. May you

play the endless alaap at the feet of Sai. My heartfelt condolences to your family and all your Rasikas."

Many, like director Sharada Ramanthan, shared anecdotes. She said, "U Srinivas once told me this story in humble, retrospective disbelief - When the great MLV heard him play (he was 11 or so!), she refused to sit in front of him, because she felt the presence of her Guru (GNB) in Srinivas. Such was his mystical magic. A great musical soul has left the transit lounge...."

Some celebrities, like theatre personality Kanthan Balakrishna Sastri, who had collaborated with him posted YouTube links, along with nostalgia . He said, "God wants to have the great pleasure of listening to this prodigy from close quarters. May His Soul rest in peace in the Lotus feet of the divine. I recollect the days we worked together in two of my projects on Smt YGP and Kumari A Kanyakumari. World will miss him certainly."

Evam's Karthik Kumar said, "U Shrinivas. The boy touched by God. Irreparable. Irreplaceable."

His wife and singer Suchi said, "RIP, Mandolin Srinivas. The unfairness of it sucks, big time. But yea, RIP."

Vocalist Gayathri was almost in tears when she posted, "I can't believe that God can be so unfair. Is it like Sankara that he was given to earth for us to enjoy his stupendous music, but taken away at the prime of his youth. Sri. U Srinivas will remain for ever my first introduction to music and the reason why I started to attend concerts. God be with the family at this hour. Biggest loss for the fraternity. Very very upset."

Other famous Carnatic musicians also expressed shock and disbelief.

"We have no words to express our grief at the passing away of one of the most charismatic musicians and iconic performers of Carnatic music - Mandolin U.Srinivas. What ecstasy, feeling and beauty he created with his music....virtuosity, emotion, and what depth and flow in every note he touched. Just a stroke...and you were

completely drawn into the spell he cast with his music. His contribution to music - encompassing multiple genres- carnatic, jazz, world, fusion- showed us how great music could beautifully blend with any genre, and also remain pristine, authentic, universally appealing and eternally relevant. We will miss you Srinivas! May your music continue to reverberate in the world beyond, as it does in our hearts..., "they said.

Vocalist Aruna Sairam said, "The Mandolin falls silent. Tragedy, the loss of U Srinivas is a great loss not only to the musical world but to me personally, having known and collaborated with him. Unbelievable. RIP."

Renowned historian of Carnatic music vidhushies V Sriram, exclaimed, "Oh god! Mandolin Shrinivas! Truly those whom the gods love die young. What a loss for the world of music."

Classical pianist Anil Srinivasan said, "My world just ended. Srinivas is no more", while Subasri Thanickachalam said from USA, "Mandolin Srinivas No replacement".

Vocalist Nirmala Rajasekar sent her condolences to Srinivas' brother Rajesh, and added, "Dumbstruck. Why? RIP Mandolin Wizard Shri Srinivas. You, your service to the world and your music are immortal."

Classical dancer Anita R Ratnam, bemoaned the loss to the world of performing arts, and said, "Another great loss. Mandolin U Srinivas.... The creative fires are burning out all over this planet. Genius... Simple.. Soulful... Now ...no more... Planets are surely warring..."

Here are a couple of his popular songs on YouTube

Endaro Mahanubhavulu (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvC4Pleog_0)

Jazz in Vienna (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA7Mzo73cd4>)