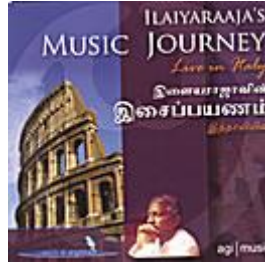


# Mp3 Ilaiyaraaja's Music Journey: Live In Italy - World: Asian



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Live Recording 14 MP3 Songs WORLD: Asian, WORLD: World Fusion Details: Maestro Ilaiyaraaja - An Introduction He was born Rasayya on June 2, 1943, in Pannaipuram village, which did not have a school. As a boy, he had to walk to Kombai, the nearest town, just to get an education. Family exigencies forced him to give up studies after class eight and sing for his elder step brother, who gave concerts in Pannaipuram and surrounding villages and towns. Thus began the musical journey of Ilayaraja, a phenomenal composer. Although the bulk of his work has been in films, Ilaiyaraaja has several independent albums. They include anthologies of devotional songs, the latest being Guru Ramana Geetam (2004); two collections of instrumental music showing a remarkable fusion of western and Indian classical styles How To Name It (1984) and Nothing But Wind (1987); a Carnatic classical collection played by Mandolin Srinivas (1994); and a compilation of the background music scored for a documentary entitled India 24 Hours (1996). In 1968, at the age of twenty-five, Rasayya left his village for Chennai to find work as a musician in films. As aspiring musicians were expected to read western musical notation, he started lessons with the late Master Dhanraj, who introduced him to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and other western classical composers. Rasayya, whose name had by then changed to Raja, also began work as an assistant to film music director G.K. Venkatesh. This apprenticeship lasted for a few years until he met a producer who changed his life forever. The producer was Panju Arunachalam, who was looking for a new music director for his film Annakili. Panju Arunachalam not only gave Raja the job, but also an exciting new name: Ilaiyaraaja (translatable as Youthful Raja or Prince). Annakili, which was released in 1976, proved a smash hit, mainly for its music. Following his debut, Ilayarajas growth in films was meteoric. The number of films per year rose steadily and a record set in 1992, when he had 56

films. By the end of 2004, he had scored songs and background music for more than 800 films in five Indian languages: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi. Although the bulk of his work has been in films, Ilaiyaraaja has several independent albums. They include anthologies of devotional songs, the latest being *Guru Ramana Geetam* (2004); two collections of instrumental music showing a remarkable fusion of western and Indian classical styles *How To Name It* (1984) and *Nothing But Wind* (1987); a Carnatic classical collection played by Mandolin Srinivas (1994); and a compilation of the background music scored for a documentary entitled *India 24 Hours* (1996). Accolades, awards, and titles bear testimony to Ilayarajas recognition as a composer. He won three national awards for the films *Sagara Sangamam* (1983), *Sindhu Bhairavi* (1985), and *Rudra Veena* (1988). As a scorer of background music in films, he has attained cult status. Karunanidhi, eminent orator, litterateur, and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, conferred upon him the title *Isaignyani* (one who bears full knowledge of music). When news broke in 1993 that he had composed and recorded a symphony, he was called a maestro. He also found an ardent admirer in the late Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, one of the most respected musicians of Carnatic classical music. Accolades, awards, and titles bear testimony to Ilayarajas recognition as a composer. He won three national awards for the films *Sagara Sangamam* (1983), *Sindhu Bhairavi* (1985), and *Rudra Veena* (1988). As a scorer of background music in films, he has attained cult status. Karunanidhi, eminent orator, litterateur, and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, conferred upon him the title *Isaignyani* (one who bears full knowledge of music). When news broke in 1993 that he had composed and recorded a symphony, he was called a maestro. He also found an ardent admirer in the late Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, one of the most respected musicians of Carnatic classical music. Ilaiyaraaja is considered a phenomenon for many reasons. First, there is the sheer volume of work in films. Then, there is the pace and method, which have become legendary. Typically, he arrives early in the morning at the Prasad Recording Studio, Chennai, and within a couple of hours, finishes writing the notations for the days recording in its entirety, for the singers and instruments. The rest of the day is spent in recording, editing, and mixing. Ilayarajas compositions outside of films have also greatly enhanced his reputation, which peaked in 1993, when he recorded a western classical symphony with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of John Scott. The symphony was written in less than a month. Above all, there is the outstanding quality of the music itself. Although Ilayarajas musical sensibility is anchored to a bedrock of recognizable genres Indian folk, Western classical, and Carnatic classical he has an uncanny

ability to separate and unify these genres at will. Shortlisting his use of innovative strategies in film music is difficult. They include: lengthy and well-structured orchestral interludes between charanams (stanzas); exquisite over dubbing of voices; extended use of chorus seconds; and the seamless blend of Carnatic and western classical styles. He was as adept at creating a large set of varied songs based on a single popular Carnatic raaga (scale), as he was of using an uncommon raaga. As for the folk songs called naatupurapaattu (rural songs) they are crafted with a Vivaldian capacity for infinite variety within a format. His ability to richly layer his orchestration, and to match the song to the singer, the lyrics to the tune, and the overall score to the situation and mood, is unparalleled. There is perhaps a final and overriding reason to call Ilaiyaraaja a phenomenon. His achievement belies his meagre formal training in music. There was undoubtedly a musical side to his life in Pannaipuram. In Chennai, he had lessons with Master Dhanraj, a Gold Medal in classical guitar from Trinity College, London earned in just six months and some years of training in Carnatic classical music under T.V. Gopalakrishnan. But the question remains: how could someone exposed only to folk tunes and popular Tamil film songs for the first twenty-five years of his life, and with just a few years training, vault film music to such unprecedented heights of beauty and sophistication? And how was he able to take his music so far beyond the film medium? Ilaiyaraaja himself has said time and again that his music is the gift from God. It is well known that within a few years of his debut in films, his appearance and personality underwent a drastic and permanent change. He shaved his head, donned traditional white clothes, became a vegetarian, marked his forehead with kungumam and vibhuti, and turned into a recluse. The change was a spiritual awakening that insulated him from the pressures of the commercial world of cinema and at the same time fuelled his creative energy to set and achieve its own goals. It is in this new avatar that the composer has produced and continues to create his best music both in films and outside. Although an exceptional composer belongs to all those who hear his music, Ilaiyaraaja belongs to the Tamils in a very special way. He stormed into their entertainment world and took them on a musical journey of their villages, temples, and the Chennai metropolis. He released Carnatic and western classical music from their ivory towers and made them available to every paamaran (layman). The Tamil lyrics, some penned by Ilaiyaraaja himself, expressed their traditional values and moved them deeply. For example thaay paasam (a mother's love) ranks high for the Tamils and is a recurrent theme in his songs. They wept with him as he sang Enna peththa aaththa (from the film Ennai vittu poogaathe, 1988). All said and done, perhaps the source of inspiration for the phenomenal

composer is a simple one after all his rasigargal (fans). Paataale budhdhi sonnaar, a song written and sung by him for the 1989 hit film Karakaatukaaran, sums up his work as a composer and ends with the words freely translated below: My true bosses are my fans. As long as they want it, I will serve up my musical feast.

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